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Switzerland agrees to gold inquiry

Richard Norton-Taylor

THE Swiss government this week responded to growing international pressure by agreeing to an official inquiry into the whereabouts of Nazi gold and Jewish assets deposited in Swiss bank accounts.

It backed a bill that would set up a commission of historians, lawyers, and financial experts told to penetrate the country's bank secrecy laws. "The investigation will cover the lost or stolen assets of victims of National Socialism [Nazism] as well as Nazi assets brought into Switzerland," a cabinet statement said.

Flavio Cotti, the Swiss foreign minister — who was due to meet the UK Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, in Zurich on Wednesday — said Switzerland was prepared to investigate what he called "this chapter in its recent history".

He added that the Swiss authorities had already "dealt intensively with the issue of assets of Nazi victims" — a reference to a 1946 agreement between Switzerland, Britain, France and the United States.

The British Foreign Office last week published a report showing that the Allies received only $58 million — just 12 per cent of the total amount of looted Nazi gold estimated to have been deposited in Swiss banks. The Foreign Office report suggested that Nazi gold worth nearly $6 billion at today's prices was deposited in Swiss banks.

Greville Janner, British Labour MP and chairman of the Holocaust Educational Trust, who met Robert Reich, chargé d'affaires at the Swiss embassy in London on Monday, said it seemed that "the glacier of immorality is starting to melt through the heat of international pressure". Mr Janner asked the Swiss government to set up an agency to help survivors of the Holocaust trace their assests.

A group of relatives of Auschwitz victims gathered outside the Swiss embassy during the meeting.

An international committee, headed by Paul Volcker, former chairman of the US Federal Reserve, is separately investigating dormant accounts belonging to Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

Newly released US documents include 1944 intelligence intercepts suggesting that Swiss banks "gave tremendous assistance to the enemy" in operations dictated "solely by the profit motive of Swiss banks".

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Apprehensive Bosnian Muslims queue to vote at the weekend in Memici, near Tuzla. President Izetbegovic may lose out through Serb manipulation of the vote

Hardliners battle it out in Bosnia's historic election

Julian Borger in Sarajevo

BOSNIA'S first elections after a 43-month war seemed set on Tuesday to hand victory to communal hardliners — leaving rival moderates far behind.

In vote counting for the top job in a joint Bosnian presidency, hardline Serb nationalist Momcilo Krajisnik was making big gains on the Muslim president, Alija Izetbegovic, according to unofficial election tallies.

As internationally supervised counting continued into Tuesday, there were clear signs that Mr Izetbegovic's electoral advantage as head of Bosnia's Muslim majority had been significantly eroded by the combination of a fairly low Muslim turnout, a large number of spoilt ballots and the successful manipulation of the Serb electorate by its separatist leadership.

Most observers believe that Mr Izetbegovic's party, the SDA, would refuse to accept Mr Krajisnik, the leading Bosnian Serb candidate, in the role of chairman of the three-man presidency. The SDA accuses Mr Krajisnik of masterminding ethnic cleansing. Under present rules, Mr Krajisnik would become Bosnia's leader for two years.

The SDA has already prepared the ground for a boycott of the results by a polling day announcement that it considered the vote on Serb territory invalid because of alleged widespread irregularities. SDA non-cooperation would trigger a post-election crisis, setting back the timetable for creating power-sharing institutions on the back of the poll.

The chief election monitor, Ed van Thijn, said on Monday that voting had been conducted properly in 97 per cent of polling stations and there were no major irregularities. But he expressed concern about the secessionist rhetoric used during the campaign and recommended that certification of the elections should be withheld until the Bosnian Serb leadership renounced its separatist aspirations.

The Washington-based International Crisis Group, which is helping to monitor the elections, called the conduct of the vote into question, accusing Serb authorities of herding Bosnian Serb refugees in Yugoslavia over the border to vote in Bosnia, on pain of losing their refugee status.

The IGC added: "Against this background of adverse conditions, electoral engineering and disenfranchisement, these elections cannot be described as free, fair or democratic."

About 1.4 million Muslims were eligible to vote, compared with 900,000 Serbs. But only about a million Muslims were in a position to vote for Mr Izetbegovic or other Muslim candidates. The remaining 400,000 were registered in the "Republika Srpska" (the 49 per cent of Bosnia under Serb control), and so — under the electoral rules — could only vote for a Serb.

Major Simon Haselock, an I-For spokesman, said only 20,000 mainly-Muslim voters had crossed the line to vote in their pre-war districts in Serb areas — about 13 per cent of those estimated to be eligible.

A United Nations official said that while the turnout among Muslims was thought to have been 60 per cent, the Bosnian Serbs had been more regimented. Serb turnout was estimated as 70 per cent.

Another damaging factor for Mr Izetbegovic was the high incidence of spoilt ballot papers in the Muslim-Croat federation. The federation ballot paper presented lists of both Muslim and Croat candidates. Election monitors said "large numbers" of voters had ticked candidates in both lists, spoiling the ballot.

"You take all these factors altogether, and I would say Izetbegovic is in trouble," said a veteran UN observer.

With 38 of 109 municipalities reporting, Mr Izetbegovic had 185,368 votes to 121,391 for Mr Krajisnik, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe said.

On Sunday Western governments and Nato commanders welcomed the peaceful conduct of the historic elections, but even as vote-counting got under way, controversy broke out over the fairness of the poll and the validity of the results.

President Clinton praised the election, but said the task of building democracy was not finished and that the US would do its part to help. "Our commitment to Bosnia does not end with these elections," he said.

Richard Holbrooke, the US diplomat who brokered last year's Dayton peace accord, announced that the US would lead a post-election diplomatic effort to maintain the path to peace, including a meeting in Paris this month between President Izetbegovic and Serbia's president, Slobodan Milosevic.

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Washington Post, page 15

Canada hits back at US law on Cuba

David Crary in Toronto

IN A swipe at American trade policy, the Canadian government introduced a bill this week to blunt the effects of United States legislation aimed at punishing foreign companies active in Cuba.

Expected to win easy passage in parliament, the bill takes direct aim at the Helms-Burton act passed by the US Congress earlier this year and signed into law by President Clinton.

Under Helms-Burton, lawsuits may be filed in the US against foreign companies whose operations in Cuba make use of property confiscated from American firms during the 1959 revolution. Executives of such firms could be barred from the US.

Canada is one of the largest foreign investors in Cuba, and a Toronto-based mining company, Sherritt International, has become the first target of the visa-ban provision of Helms-Burton.

The legislation introduced on Monday stipulates that Canada will not recognise court rulings issued in accordance with Helms-Burton and will not help collect judgments issued against Canadian firms. The bill would allow Canadian firms to file countersuits against Canadian subsidiaries of US firms that make use of Helms-Burton to pursue damages.

The bill would also make it possible for the Canadian government to fine Canadian firms that knuckle under to the provisions of the Helms-Burton law.

Canada has been joined by Mexico and western Europe in vigorously opposing the US legislation. The uproar appeared to be a factor in Mr Clinton's decision in July to waive the lawsuit provision of Helms-Burton until after the November presidential election. — *AP*

Austria	AS30	Malta	45c
Belgium	BF76	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 400	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Racial discrimination a fact of life in Finland

IT IS difficult to forgive Eugene Holman for his comments on race relations in Finland (September 1). Some reinforcement of Jon Henley's original article (August 18) seems to be in order.

Commenting on a recent Finnish periodic report, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was particularly critical of the tendency to underrate the importance of racist phenomena in Finland. Eugene Holman gives a good example of this as he argues that such phenomena "have to be put into perspective".

The fact is that there are quite a few places where Holman, as a black person, would be ill-advised to go alone. The situation in the eastern Finnish town of Joensuu a couple of years ago was so bad that the best advice the Chief Constable could give to black residents was to stay home in the evenings. Shortly after this, a black American basketball player left Joensuu, complaining that he feared for his safety in public places.

We do not argue that middle-class blacks and other immigrants cannot succeed in this largely middle-class country. It is, however, time to stop dwelling on the alleged forgivable historical causes of Finnish "reserve with respect to foreigners" (a euphemism for xenophobia) and to deal with racial discrimination in all its forms.

There are countless examples of institutionalised racism but perhaps the most telling is the commonplace phenomenon of Russian-speaking parents instructing their children to speak in a whisper when in public places such as buses and trains. Holman points out that the current and highly popular Miss Finland is black, but racism in Finland is not only about skin colour.

At the level of the law, it is still noticeable that only sex discrimination is taken seriously in Finland. A black person who is passed over in favour of a less well-qualified Finnish employee has no effective legal remedy unless the two candidates are of opposite sexes. Furthermore, a proposal to amend this state of affairs was rejected by the Refugee and Migration Affairs Commission with no discussion.

Immigrants in Finland have fought for and achieved an extraordinary liberalisation of the law in the last decade. Non-citizens have, for example, gained freedom of speech and lawful assembly. However, it should not be overlooked that such a giddy pace of reform is only possible because so many of these rights were denied to immigrants for so long.

Daryl Taylor,
Association for Foreigners in Finland, Helsinki, Finland

Bosnians betrayed

WITH the so-called free elections in Bosnia taking place this month, it is time to ask why they have descended into farce in the nine months since the Dayton Agreement. The answer is that not one of the more constructive points of Dayton has been seriously implemented by the international community. Let me list a few:

❑ Little of the money promised for reconstruction has ever reached Bosnia. In consequence, the economy remains stagnant, unemployment overwhelming. There has been no extensive rebuilding programme even in Sarajevo.

❑ The promised road link between Gorazde and Sarajevo has never been constructed, nor plans made for it. Conditions in Gorazde remain appalling.

❑ Sarajevo's airport has only recently been reopened for a minimal amount of civilian traffic while Tuzla airport remains closed. In consequence Bosnia is still isolated.

❑ Very few refugees have been helped to return to their homes.

❑ Even the investigation of mass graves has been abandoned under pressure from the Pale regime.

❑ General Mladic, an indicted war criminal, remains commander-in-chief of the Bosnian Serb army, with which United Nation's Implementation Force is in constant communication.

Moreover, Radovan Karadzic's removal from the leadership of the Pale regime, trumpeted as a great American achievement, means precisely nothing. He is still in effective control of both party and state.

The election results can only harden present territorial divisions, providing a pseudo-legitimacy. As those divisions remain profoundly unjust, depriving at least a million Bosnians of the right to live in their own homes, this can only enhance the likelihood of a further conflict.

(Prof) Adrian Hastings,
University of Leeds, Leeds

More guns equals more deaths

FRANK APPLETON resents the opprobrium directed at hand gun owners following the Dunblane and Port Arthur massacres and argues that the real problem is violence in society (September 8). Who could disagree that people with sinister objectives will find ways of committing crimes with or without guns?

He misses the point, though. The frightening aspect of guns in society today is their ease of availability, singular purpose and devastating power compared with the weapons of a generation ago.

He is quite wrong to argue that further restrictions on private gun ownership will do nothing to promote public safety. No matter how responsibly gun owners may behave, three common occurrences defy the most carefully designed and implemented controls.

First is the theft of privately held firearms and ammunition, which will always be vulnerable if a criminal is determined enough to steal them. Second is the possibility of a registered owner suffering a mental breakdown and turning the gun on himself or innocent citizens. Third, accidents can always happen; owners who keep their weapons at home must be ever vigilant against an unlocked case allowing their children access to firearms.

Common sense suggests that the fewer privately held guns we have, the lower the probability of such tragedies occurring in future.

(Dr) David Coy,
Hamilton, New Zealand

DR APPLETON is correct to say that violence itself is a problem (September 8), but is it not wise in treating an arsonist for pyromania to take away his matches?

Kenneth Yau,
Houston, Texas, USA

Language barriers

FERNAND de Varennes (September 1) misquotes Charles Trueheart's article (August 11) about Quebec's language policies, no doubt confusing your readers. He himself is "perpetuating misunderstandings . . . and contributing to frustration and conflict", to use his own words.

What Trueheart actually said was: "Canada *recognises* two official languages — English and French" (emphasis added), but de Varennes says that [Trueheart] "sets the tone by stating that all of Canada is bilingual" which he clearly does not. De Varennes then continues to mislead by saying that Trueheart's statement that "Quebec . . . has just one official language: French" is incorrect.

De Varennes must have been in Australia a long time, since French has been the official language of the *province* of Quebec since the Liberal government of Robert Bourassa passed Bill 22 in 1974, compelling children of immigrants to pass language tests to gain admission to the English school system. Bill 101 — the so-called language law — was passed by the Parti Québécois government elected in 1976, and came into effect in 1977, further restricting free access to schools and the use of English.

When Trueheart says, "Canada recognises two official languages," he is obviously referring to the federal government. Even here in Montreal, I can go into a federal government office — the post office, for example — and receive service in either of the "official (federal) languages", and for ordinary people in most situations, either language is acceptable.

But the Parti Québécois minister responsible for the language, Louise Beaudouin, says that she will "never" allow Montreal to become a bilingual city — even though more than 100 languages are spoken here. Sad, isn't it?

(Dr) Richard Lock,
Westmount, Quebec, Canada

Troubled in Port Moresby

I WAS quite excited to find a full page article on Papua New Guinea (Leaving the stone age by degrees, September 1). But when I saw a picture of the highlanders in full *bilas* labelled as "Papuans" (a fundamental mistake that would infuriate both groups), I knew that I shouldn't expect too much.

The article was supposed to be about an invitation to visit a remote highlands village. This would have been very interesting for your readers. Similarly, the notion of a country of 4 million people having 20 per cent of the world's languages implies that this is one of the most variegated and fascinating regions on the planet.

Instead, we were given the usual expat gossip on Moresby criminal gangs and tired, simplistic insights into the Bougainville conflict together with the remarkable revelation that violence is part of the culture. Do you dispute that just 50 years ago PNG was the unwilling host to the bloodiest tribal fight in human history, and that PNG had nothing to do with the conflict?

Peter Mildner,
Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

Briefly

IN the early 1980s I investigated modern cults for a minor science-fiction magazine. The Church of Scientology (Church that Ron built, September 8) allowed me to research with reasonable freedom.

I found many of the theories of L Ron Hubbard to be convincing his followers to be friendly, intelligent and honest. Their attempts to recruit me were persistent but not invasive.

However, I found myself asking why, if Dianetics was so good, were its theories not more widely and more cheaply, if not freely, available? Why the secrecy, hierarchy and rigmarole attached to the Church of Scientology? And why, most importantly, the personality cult around its founder? I was forced to the conclusion, mainly based on the fantastic and improbable autobiographical detail made available by Hubbard, that the founder of Scientology himself was a mountebank.

Paul Thompson,
Scone, Scotland

IN PLAYING out his role as assumed world leader, President Clinton may be sending strong messages to Saddam Hussein but he is also helping to create a generation of young people in the Arab world who loathe and resent the West in general and American "leadership" in particular.

Cathy Aitchison,
London

WHETHER or not titles really matter, taking away the title of HRH from the mother of the future king certainly gives the appearance of a revengeful, punishing and vindictive act.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of this particular Palace decree, to the majority of the British people Princess Diana will always remain Her Royal Highness.

Dorothy A F Phillips,
San Diego, California, USA

THE article about the blast aboard a Japanese deep-sea trawler (September 1) leaves me a little confused. How can a blast be triggered by a gas (Freon, Dupont's trade name for their CFC refrigerant gases), which is (unless the Japanese have developed a trawler which can fly high in the ozone layer) virtually inert?

Simon Holmes,
Dachau, Germany

● The report that there had been an explosion on board the trawler later turned out to be false — *Editor*

THREE words of Frank Lloyd Wright, "greed pushing upwards", seem a fitting description of Norman Foster's proposed skyscraper.

William Cookson,
Editor, Agenda magazine, London

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Clinton trades strategy for short-term gain

ANALYSIS
Martin Walker

EVERYONE is claiming victory in the Iraqi crisis. Saddam Hussein has re-asserted his authority over northern Iraq, and left the original Gulf war coalition in disarray. But President Bill Clinton says that in the oil-rich Gulf — where it matters to United States interests — President Saddam is more boxed in, and the Gulf allies more secure, than ever.

That depends how one defines security. Iraq's rebuilt land forces could not mount a serious attack to the south without being detected and hindered by US and allied air power. The speed with which the US was able to deploy its second aircraft carrier and Stealth warplanes, and alert its troops, suggests the Pentagon's strategy could work against a new Iraqi attack.

To a US obsessed with pre-election opinion polls, that capability of enforcing its global military hegemony may be enough. But the longer-term politics and diplomacy of this not-quite war suggest US interests could face a huge defeat.

The implications of this crisis are grim for Washington. First, the oil-rich Gulf allies are so fearful of internal dissent that they would rather risk their security by offending their US protector than be seen to host US bombers, like Bahrain, or to welcome US troops, like Kuwait.

Second, Saddam Hussein is not going to be toppled by the ineffective destabilisation efforts mounted by the CIA from Jordan (halted last year), or Kurdistan, where the Irbil base was overrun by Iraqi tanks. After President Saddam has re-asserted his ability to tweak the American eagle's tailfeathers, his army is unlikely to be a fertile base for a coup.



Kurdish children play in a mudhole in Irbil, northern Iraq, as life returns to normal after the recent fighting. The city was taken by Massoud Barzani's Kurdish Democratic Party PHOTOGRAPH: JOCKEL FINCK

Third, the underlying US strategy of "dual containment" of both Iraq and Iran looks increasingly futile. The European allies are not co-operating with sanctions against Iran, and Turkey is no longer prepared even to pay lip service to its supposedly sealed border with Iraq. Dual containment assumed the two most powerful states in the region would play their assigned roles, forever fighting like cats in a sack, and cause no alarm to their neighbours. But the neighbours are *not comforted.*

Moreover, they and others are eager to trade. Witness Russia's nuclear technology deal with Iran, or Turkish and French attempts to arrange oil and gas deals with Iran and post-sanctions deals with Iraq.

Fourth, and most serious in the long run, the US is risking its second-most important alliance in the region — with Turkey. Earlier this year, the Clinton administration appeared to have secured the strategic breakthrough of an Israeli government willing to negotiate peace with the Arabs, and a Turkish government ready to reach a military alliance with Israel.

But Binyamin Netanyahu's election win has made Israeli-Arab peace problematic, and the inability of Turkey's secular political parties to agree a coalition paved the way for its first Islamist prime minister.

Turkey, Nato's southern bastion, has never received much more than military hardware for its allegiance. Stalled in its applications to join the European Union, criticised by the US for incursions into Iraq against Kurdistan Workers' Party guerrilla bases, Turkey may shift from being a minor player in the Western camp to a leading one in the Islamic world.

The US has shown its short-term power but not much strategic intelligence in a crisis that has hardly deterred its enemies, but has alarmed its Arab and European friends, and sown the seeds for more trouble to come.

US presses for support

Ian Black

AS PRESIDENT Bill Clinton insisted on Monday that he "sought no [new] confrontation" with Iraq, the US defence secretary, William Perry, consulted Michael Portillo and Charles Millon, his British and French counterparts, in London at the end of a Middle Eastern tour during which Arab states and Turkey expressed opposition to further American air strikes.

British officials insisted they stood four-square behind the United States.

"There don't need to be any words of caution," said one. "We agree with the Americans on both the military action and the political rationale of what's been happening in the Gulf."

But the officials admitted they were relieved when Washington stopped threatening responses "disproportionate with the provocations made against us" and made it clear that they did not expect Iraq to remove all air defence missiles from the southern no-fly zone in order to avoid new strikes.

Appetites for further US action are waning. Mr Perry was nevertheless expected to step up pressure on France, which has refused to back America's tough stance against Saddam Hussein.

Meanwhile Iraq tried to forestall further US attacks by declaring that it would not rebuild the air defences bombed earlier this month.

At the weekend Mr Perry visited Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain to maintain military and economic pressure on Iraq, and talks on Monday with Turkish leaders produced few signs of support.

Commanders faulted over Saudi bomb

Bradley Graham in Washington

A GOVERNMENT report on the June bombing of a US military housing complex in Saudi Arabia released on Monday faulted the defence department's entire command structure for paying insufficient attention to terrorist threats and failing to do enough to protect US forces in the Middle East.

In a scathing review of the truck-bomb attack that killed 19 airmen and wounded about 500 people near the Dhahran air base, investigators said the defence department's senior leadership neglected to issue clear instructions for safeguarding troops and shortchanged the issue of troop protection in setting budget priorities.

The on-scene commander, Brigadier-General Terry Schwalier, was singled out for being so focused on preventing a car bomb from penetrating the Khobar Towers housing complex that he did not guard against a giant blast just outside the perimeter fence, which is what occurred.

"The commander . . . did not adequately protect his forces from a terrorist attack," the report said. Gen Schwalier was cited for failing to move vulnerable airmen to safer locations, install shatterproof Mylar on windows, co-ordinate sufficiently with the Saudis, address inadequacies in the staffing and training of base guards and attend properly to other matters to improve protection.

But Gen Schwalier's superiors at the US central command, responsible for operations in the Middle East, were also excoriated for not providing him with adequate guidance and support. No senior member of the command ever inspected the security measures at Dhahran, the report observed.

The report, commissioned by President Bill Clinton, made clear that the structure of the US military operation that has evolved in Saudi Arabia since the end of the 1991 Gulf war — involving a frequent rotation of US military personnel and lack of clear command authority among military services — confounded attempts to safeguard the troops there.

Although US intelligence had been unable to forecast the time and place of the attack, investigators asserted that "a considerable body of evidence was available" indicating "terrorists had the capability and intention to target US interests in Saudi Arabia" and "Khobar Towers was a potential target". The report noted a series of security warnings as well as 10 suspicious incidents in the weeks before the attack that, "while individually insignificant, indicated possible reconnaissance and surveillance of Khobar Towers".

The report stopped short of recommending criminal charges. Wayne Downing, the retired four-star army general who headed the investigation, told reporters his charter had been simply to make an assessment, not assign culpability. The air force is conducting a separate judicial inquiry to determine whether courts-martial or other action is warranted.

Nor did the report shed any light on who may have been behind the bombing that tore the face off an eight-storey building in the housing complex, which was the residence of the several thousand airmen and support personnel involved in enforcing a ban on flights by Iraqi military aircraft over southern Iraq. Defence officials said the hunt for the perpetrators of the attack is being handled by the Saudis and the FBI.

The size and sophistication of the attack shocked the Pentagon. A considerably smaller car bomb had exploded in the Saudi capital of Riyadh seven months before, killing five US service members working at a Saudi national guard training facility. But that was the first such terrorist attack in Saudi Arabia, and while security was subsequently tightened at US military sites, defence officials did not fully appreciate how much the threat had changed. — *Washington Post*

Apartheid killer seeks amnesty

Chris McGreal in Johannesburg

A FORMER South African police colonel, once described as apartheid's most effective assassin, accused senior police officers this week of ordering the murders, and claimed that leading politicians, including the former president P W Botha, must have known about at least some of them.

Colonel Eugene de Kock — convicted last month on 89 charges, including murder, gun-running and fraud — began his revelations about the former regime's dirty tricks campaign in the hope that his sentence might be cut and his chances of an amnesty improved.

He told the supreme court in Pretoria that he had suffered nightmares and ill health because of his work as the former commander of a police counter-insurgency unit near Pretoria and as a member of a hit squad in Namibia.

He told his long history of covert activities dating back to the Rhodesian bush war. He has made it known that he plans to implicate about 10 police generals and at least two former cabinet ministers — Adriaan Vlok and Hernus Kriel — in the hit squad operations.

The police generals have themselves said they will testify before Bishop Desmond Tutu's truth commission on apartheid-era crimes.

De Kock, aged 47, accused Mr Botha of sanctioning a raid in 1985 into Lesotho in which about 10 African National Congress activists were killed. He said three police generals were involved in planning the raid. He also said three prisoners in Namibia were killed on the orders of a police general.

He admitted he was responsible for the murder 13 years ago of Zwelibanzi Nyanda, chief of the ANC's military wing in Lesotho and brother of the army's current chief of staff. De Kock said Nyanda was unarmed and wounded when he was shot: "I started shooting at him. He fell, but stood up and continued running — and we didn't miss when we shot him." He and colleagues involved in the operation were awarded medals.

It was De Kock's second medal: his first was for for blowing up the ANC's office in London.

He said he had been turned into a ruthless killer while serving with Koevoet, the now defunct counter-insurgency unit of the South African police, which combatted guerrillas fighting for Namibia's independence.

De Kock's chances of a complete amnesty are poor because there was evidence during the trial that although some of the murders were political, others were tied to fraud rackets and gun-running.

Bossi's secessionists defy Rome

John Hooper in Venice

HUNDREDS of thousands of Italians turned out to demonstrate for and against the unity of their country at the weekend as the leader of the Northern League, Umberto Bossi, gave the government one year in which to meet his demands for a formal division between north and south.

Tens of thousands of Mr Bossi's supporters massed beside St Mark's Canal in Venice as he read out a "declaration of independence" modelled on that of the United States' founding fathers.

But the league's show of strength was dwarfed by a far-right march in support of unity in Milan, where police estimated the crowd at 150,000.

The league's eccentric ceremony nevertheless represented the most blatant challenge to the legitimacy of the Italian republic since its creation more than 50 years ago. Its leader's 12-month ultimatum threatens to cast a shadow over politics and to renew uncertainty.

In the ugliest incident of the day, police with truncheons laid into extreme rightwing demonstrators in Chioggia, near Venice. The rightwingers, wearing fascist-style black shirts, had tried to attack the secessionist demonstration.

Last week, an attack by the far left on a league rally in Turin also ended in violent clashes with police.

As Mr Bossi reached the Venice lagoon with a flotilla of small craft, the bank was a forest of separatist flags. Surrounded by league MPs, Mr Bossi read out a Declaration of Independence and Sovereignty of Padania — his name for the northern state he seeks to create — which begins by quoting Thomas Jefferson.

After a long list of grievances, Mr Bossi declared: "We, the peoples of Padania, solemnly proclaim that Padania is a federal, independent and sovereign republic."

An Italian flag flying beside the podium was then lowered. As the league's green-shirted National Guards raised the standard of Padania — white with a green flower — doves were released. The crowd, which police estimated at fewer than 20,000, cheered.

But in Milan, the former neo-fascist leader Gianfranco Fini told his followers: "Italy is here. Italy will not be insulted and it will not be divided." He called Mr Bossi's proclamation of independence "an insult to history and an insult to reason".

The Northern League, which won 10.6 per cent of the vote in April's general election, is strongest around Milan and Venice, but Mr Bossi's state would stretch south to within 100km of Rome.

His declaration was accompanied by a "transitional constitution" which made clear that the proclamation would not take effect for up to 12 months. It empowered a "provisional government" formed by Mr Bossi earlier this year to open talks aimed at a "treaty of agreed separation". But it said negotiations "must not continue beyond September 15, 1997".

It is clear that Mr Bossi has posed a serious dilemma for the centre-left government. It cannot bow to his demands, yet faces the threat of growing disobedience.

Mr Bossi said on Saturday that the league would form a militia to defend its interests. President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro in turn warned that Mr Bossi could face criminal action. "If someone moves to incite illegal acts, the matter then passes into the hands of magistrates," Mr Scalfaro said.

Le Monde, page 19

The Week

CHINA has ordered a halt to unsanctioned protests against Japan's claim to sovereignty over a cluster of tiny islands in the East China Sea.
Le Monde, page 19

SEPARATIST militants attacked polling stations, and protesters mounted a state-wide strike as India's troubled Jammu and Kashmir state held the second phase of local elections. It is the state's first assembly elections since 1987.

A UNITED STATES bill denying federal recognition to same-sex marriages and letting states refuse to sanction such unions licensed in other states won final congressional approval from the Senate.

THE Russian president, Boris Yeltsin, has handed the prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, partial control of key ministries as he prepares for heart surgery.

THE United Nations Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has vowed to defy US resistance and fight to the bitter end for a second term.

A 22-YEAR-OLD unemployed Australian, Aaron Martin, was charged in a Sydney court with beating to death British tourist Brian Hagland at Bondi Beach earlier this month.

THE LEADER of Spain's Communist Party has called for the monarchy to be abolished, raising the republican banner and breaking an embargo on discussion of the constitution since the death of Franco and introduction of democracy nearly 20 years ago.

WITH no ports and no coastline to defend since allowing Eritrea's independence in 1993, Ethiopia is putting its navy up for sale.

COLOMBIA'S vice-president, Humberto de la Calle, resigned. He said the president, Ernesto Samper, should also step down because he lacked credibility.

McGEORGE BUNDY, national security adviser to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, has died aged 77.

OJ SIMPSON'S civil trial over causing the wrongful death of his ex-wife and a friend began in Santa Monica, California. There will be no cameras present and he will be compelled to testify under oath.

TUPAC Shakur, the controversial actor and rapper who sold millions of records in the US, has died at the age of 25 from gunshot wounds suffered in a drive-by shooting in Las Vegas.

Nato opens its arms to Russia

John Palmer in Brussels

NATO governments are to offer Russia an unprecedented partnership in jointly managing Europe's security, in return for a limited expansion by the alliance to include countries in central Europe, according to senior officials in Brussels.

The offer will be made to President Boris Yeltsin at a special Nato summit to which he will be invited next spring, the officials said. The summit will sanction sweeping changes in Nato's military structure designed to give its European Union members a leadership role.

A blueprint for a 21st century European security system, being finalised by alliance governments, envisages a "Nato and Russia Charter" organisation with its own secretariat. Russia would have a privileged role in helping shape key political and security decisions in Europe.

There are also moves to create a political directorate — including Russia, the United States and the larger EU states within the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which has already been mandated to oversee Europe's post-cold war security.

"Obviously, detailed discussion with the Russians will have to await President Yeltsin's heart operation. But we believe this new approach should find a positive response in Moscow," one Nato source said in Brussels. "Already we notice that Russian rhetoric against Nato enlargement is being toned down."

The summit, to be held in France or the US, will invite four countries — the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia — to begin negotiations for membership. They are expected to join formally in April 1999 — the alliance's 50th anniversary. The Baltic states and other east European countries will be promised closer involvement in Nato peacekeeping operations under the Partnership for Peace.

Western leaders are increasingly confident that Russia will accept a limited Nato enlargement, on condition that no nuclear weapons or foreign troops are based in the new member states — something Nato is ready to agree.



THE skeletal, swollen-bellied children discovered in the western Liberian town of Tubmanburg show some of the worst symptoms of malnutrition seen in almost seven years of civil war, aid workers say.

The children, 150 of whom have been evacuated to a special feeding centre in the capital, Monrovia, were among thousands of starving civilians discovered by aid workers in the town, which had been cut off by the civil war since February. Food is now being shuttled in by road.

The precise death toll is unclear but locals speak of up to 16 people dying each day before help arrived.

Aid workers, who estimate that more than 80 per cent of the town's population of 35,000 is seriously malnourished, say hundreds of hungry civilians have emerged from the forest looking for food as word of the relief operation has spread. — *Reuter*

PHOTOGRAPH: KENT PAGE

India defies UN vote for global test ban

Mark Tran in New York

THE United Nations General Assembly last week voted to approve the draft global nuclear test ban treaty, but India fulfilled its threat to vote against the text, dismissing it as a "worthless piece of paper".

The resolution approving the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was supported by 158 states. Libya and Bhutan voted with India. Cuba, Lebanon, Mauritius, Syria and Tanzania abstained.

The treaty, to bar permanently all nuclear explosions, should be ready for a formal signing when world leaders gather for the UN's annual session later this month. But the CTBT cannot take effect until all 44 countries with nuclear arms or power stations, including the three nuclear "threshold" states — India, Pakistan and Israel — have signed and ratified it.

"India will never sign this unequal treaty. Not now. Not later," the Indian representative, Arundhati Ghose, told the assembly.

Before the vote, an Indian foreign ministry official said: "As the CTBT text stands, it cannot go into force without India's acceptance. Sadly, therefore, it will be passed but only to remain a worthless piece of paper."

The vote followed India's decision last month to block the treaty's adoption at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament. Australia made the imaginative move of bringing the treaty to the UN.

British diplomats said efforts would be made to persuade India to sign, perhaps in the form of some regional agreement to allay its security concerns. The hope is that many countries will sign the treaty in the following months, putting pressure on India to join the club.

But the Indian foreign secretary, Salman Haider, told a news conference that New Delhi would not give up its nuclear option. "I don't see us being pressurised by sheer numbers," he said.

India's ambassador to the UN, Prakash Shah, argued that computer simulation and laser tests could "open the way to fourth-generation nuclear weapons testing even without explosive testing".

Pakistan said it would also refuse to sign because of India's stance. Munir Akram, Pakistan's negotiator at Geneva, said that adoption of the CTBT by the UN General assembly "should herald a new dawn in the history of the quest for nuclear disarmament.

"Instead a dark sun has appeared over the skies of South Asia. The challenge posed by our neighbour is not only to the CTBT. It is a challenge to the international consensus for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation."

● France ended a 25-year doomsday watch this week, shutting down 18 land-based nuclear missiles at a launch base under the Provence countryside and limiting its nuclear defence to weapons in submarines and bombers.

Romania's Gypsies turn to ethnic terror

Ed Vulliamy in Sighisoara

LIKE MOST of the peasants in her village, Anna Philp was born, raised and widowed on the scrap of land in the Transylvanian foothills where she kept chickens and grew a little fruit, until two weeks ago.

Now she is among the last of her kind, her friends, peers and family gone. She is living out her last days in mortal fear — the final witness to a largely hidden ethnic rupture in the Balkans, which will end 1,000 years of history.

Her terror is rich in irony, given the persecutions of this century. She is an ethnic German, the last in a line of German-speaking Saxons who came to this part of what is now Romania in the 12th century, a place called Siebenburgen. Those who are ravaging her village and trying to drive her out with threats and violence that will complete their occupation are the Roma, or Gypsies of Romania, one of the most oppressed minorities in Europe.

Numbering about 2 million, the Roma are the largest minority in Romania. They are believed to have migrated to the country from northern India between the 10th and 11th centuries. Throughout history, Gypsies have been mistreated in Romania.

Under the Nazis, tens of thousands were deported or murdered, and under the maverick communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu Roma villages were bulldozed and the communities concentrated in urban ghettos. After the fall of Ceausescu's regime in 1989, the industrious Germans of Transylvania, weary of both communism and its legacy, began to take advantage of their mother country's offer to take them "home", on condition that they prove three generations of ancestry.

The exodus of the last 500,000 Germans from the new Romania is complete, except for a few old people and far fewer young ones who either could not face the move, or prefer to stay on the land of their ancestors.

The Roma moved into almost every house they abandoned. Like the surrounding villages, Dealu Frumos, just south of Sighisoara, the supposed birthplace of Count Dracula, has in four years been transformed from a German into a Roma community.

In the past six years, the Roma have found themselves once again the target of mob violence and lynchings at the hands of the Romanian majority. And although more than 300 houses have been burnt down and about 10 Roma killed in mob violence, no Romanian citizen has been convicted of murder, arson or physical injury against a gypsy. It is in this climate that the Roma have turned against another defenceless and despised community — the ethnic Germans.

The departed Germans have left a series of architectural jewels: the mighty fortified churches of Transylvania, fantastical Gothic wonders with fairytale towers surrounded by stubborn ramparts sliced with the archers' narrow windows.

These Lutheran bastions are emblematic of Transylvania, and were built so that villagers could take refuge within their walls. These walls withstood many an Ottoman onslaught, and other armies down the centuries, and now their fortifications are needed once more, for a latterday ransacking by the Gypsies has begun. And once the last Germans leave, it can continue unabated beneath the unseeing eye of an apathetic Romania. At best, it seems the churches will become barely-visited museums. They could also become ruins.

It was to such a church in Dealu Frumos that Anna Philp, aged 74, went to worship recently, only to return home to find all her chickens gone. Two days before, she was pelted with stones thrown by her new neighbours. Her home has been all but stripped bare by thieves. "They want my house, they want me out, and they won't stop until they have got it," she says.

Her husband died of a war wound in 1946, and her son and her friends have moved to Germany. "Maybe I will have to go there too, but what would I do in that place, an old woman like me? And what will happen to the church?"

Built in 1150, it is a majestic whitewashed structure, surrounded by determined walls above which its Gothic towers with wooden balconies reach towards the sky.

The pastor, Andreas Funk, locks the heavy door behind him as he enters the grounds between the outer wall and that of the church. "The Gypsies have already broken in once and stolen things from the yard. One of the churches around here lost its baptismal font the other day . . . In three years, my congregation has gone from 600 to 40. Those that remain are all old, and soon they will go too because they cannot defend themselves against the Gypsies."

The most glorious of the churches is on a hill above the village of Biertan, former seat of the Lutheran bishops of Transylvania. It is surrounded by three concentric walls of fortification which rise towards the summit, the outer at the foot of the hill, the other two climbing it.

The Gothic building is the stuff of a thousand tales from childhood: pointed towers, wooden balustrades, and the pastoral village below. But although Biertan is on Unesco's historic site index, that history is coming to an end. The Lutheran pastor, Plattner Ortwin, like most of his flock, has gone to Germany.

At the weekend, in a field near the Transylvanian town of Horezu, Gypsies draped in gold held their annual gathering in honour of St Grigore whose relics in the nearby monastery are said to cure diseases. The tables were covered with whole pigs roasted for the feast.

It was pointless to try to talk about Anna Philp and the last of the Germans. The Gypsy King Cioaba, who had arrived in an old Cadillac Lafayette, was talking about his people's tribulations, and "our fight against terrorism and racism". It was equally useless trying to challenge the more menacing Roma in Dealu Frumos, who either grimace, or offer a cheery wave of denial. — *The Observer*

Clinton courting new electorate



The US this week

Martin Walker

THE ELECTION may be just seven weeks away and the war clouds may have settled once more over wretched Iraq, but the most significant events of the week for the American future may well have been the gatherings of tens of thousands of people to be sworn in en masse as new citizens. Beyond these grand events, the maternity wards around the country, and the new class rolls as the children returned to school, suggested that a new demographic revolution was under way.

Some of these signs raised a smile. This year opened with a series of blizzards across the north and east of the country, which closed roads and cities for days at a time. Nine months later, we have a baby boom, with births 50 per cent higher than they were last year.

This adds an extra peak to a sizable phenomenon, which demographers are calling the baby boomlet. For each of the past seven years since 1989, the US has recorded more than 4 million births a year. The last time births broke this barrier was between 1946 and 1964, the years of the baby boom. So this latest flood of births represents in part the boomers having their own children, and doing so rather later in life than their parents did.

It also represents an America that will look rather different. The original baby-boomers of the post-war years were 75 per cent white, 11 per cent black, and 9 per cent Hispanic. The new boomers are 65 per cent white, and 15 per cent each for blacks and Hispanics. This is a development which is advancing at a striking pace. In the current edition of the Statistical Abstracts Of The US, published annually by the Census Bureau, the first table shows the projections for multi-ethnic America. In 2000, the population is likely to be a bit more than 70 per cent white. But by 2050 whites will account for barely 50 per cent of the population, while Hispanics will make up about 20 per cent, blacks 15 per cent and Asians growing fast to 10 per cent.

An America that was overwhelmingly white, with European roots, was an America which felt itself automatically a European power, able to overcome its isolationist instincts to intervene decisively in two European wars and to maintain a large military garrison in Europe for 50 years. An America that is only half-white may have different strategic priorities. When one voter in five has Hispanic ancestry, Latin America will loom very much larger in US foreign policy.

Demography is at the heart of all the great issues which the politicians should be discussing in this election season. The growing number of old people surviving into their 80s and 90s to collect their pensions and require ever more medical care is the real fiscal crisis which lies in wait for every advanced country, not just the US. And one of the reasons Bill Clinton is so far ahead in the current opinion polls is that he has managed to deflect the Republican attempt to focus on the long-term challenge of Social Security and Medicare, and turn it against them.

Bob Dole, at the age of 73, ought to do well among his elderly contemporaries. But thanks to Clinton's TV ads, they all know that Dole voted against Medicare when President Lyndon Johnson first proposed it as part of his Great Society agenda. Clinton has a line on the campaign trail, which has the old folk slapping their Zimmer frames with glee as he taunts the Republicans for daring to say that Medicare is in crisis.

"I don't understand why everybody is going around like Chicken Little and saying 'Oh — the sky is falling. We have problems in Medicare because everybody is living. Because people are staying alive'."

Long pause. A meaningful look around the crowd.

"That's a problem?" he asks, his voice dripping with sarcasm. "I thought that was the object. I thought that was the whole point of the deal."

Prolonged and tumultuous applause. And on his latest trip to Florida, he added another line, in a speech to 3,000 assembled seniors, when he surveyed their massed ranks, a tribute to the advances of geriatric medicine, and like a cathedral organist selecting just the right tone, dropped his voice to his most sincere timbre. Not another sound was to be heard as he confided: "That's not a problem. That's a triumph. You are a triumph."

One half-expects the entire front rank to keel over and expire from

Demography is at the heart of all the issues that politicians should be discussing this election season

pure joy. In a scene that is almost biblical, there is a Lazarus effect as the wheelchairs tremor with enchantment, the walking sticks punch up into the vast Floridian sky and the blue-rinsed chorus rises in hallelujahs of grandmaternal gratification.

Then, like an actor who can sculpt a mood, he goes on to tell them about his new commission to study the quality of medical care. Hillary Clinton and her disastrous foray into health reform are not mentioned. This commission will report to the trusty Vice-President Al Gore, and Clinton promises that its efforts at reform will be guided by the old Hippocratic principle: "First, do no harm."

No doubt the Gore commission will do good and useful work, but it is rather missing the point. The Medicare fund, according to its Clinton-appointed trustees, is heading for financial crisis within the next four years. The Social Security fund will be bankrupt in 2011, when Clinton qualifies to receive it.



Due south . . . with one voter in five able to claim Hispanic ancestry by 2050, Latin America will loom large in US foreign policy in the years to come PHOTOGRAPH: NEIL LIBBERT

There will be another wholly predictable demographic problem hitting the country over the next decade; the crimes committed by the large number of teenagers from the baby boomlet. Most crimes are committed by people between the ages of 15 and 30. Irrespective of any individual or generational propensity to crime, more young people means more crime, which means more public alarm about crime, and more politicians prepared to promise ever tougher measures to deal with the crime problem.

Another entirely predictable demographic challenge is already at the door, the need for a crash programme now to build more schools to cope with the baby boomlet. There was an interesting footnote to the latest Labour Department employment statistics, that one factor in the latest drop of unemployment to a mere 5.1 per cent is the number of new teachers being hired by school boards around the country. They are there to teach the boomlet babies.

The US population projections from the last census in 1990 suggested that the population could this year just top 255 million. In fact, it will very much closer to 260 million, because the death rate is a little lower than expected, the birth rate is a little higher, and above all, because the president is creating new Americans at an unprecedented rate.

Last year, almost 500,000 new citizens were sworn in, a record for the naturalisation process. This year the rate has been intensified. By the end of this month, another 1.1 million new Americans will have been made citizens since January. In the big cities of the most immigrant-friendly states, mass swearings-in have become commonplace. This week, at the Texas stadium where the Dallas Cowboys play football, 10,000 will be sworn in, and then another 15,000 in San Jose, California. Last week, 6,000 were all made citizens together in the Houston convention centre.

There are several reasons for this. Immigrants are alarmed by the new welfare law, and by California's attempts to save public funds on health and education by excluding the children of illegal immigrants. New regulations for the registration of non-citizen residents make it easy to apply for citizenship. But above all, the Clinton administration has made a concerted effort to tackle the vast backlog of applications. In 1995, there were more than a million citizenship applications, but only 445,000 people were sworn in.

The Republicans are running this year on a party platform that vows to crack down on immigrants

Under the title Citizenship USA, and under the leadership of Vice-President Gore, this backlog is being swept away and bureaucratic red tape slashed with such spirit that the Republicans now complain that criminals and other undesirables are pouring through the floodgates. The Republican complaints are fuelled by political alarm. They suspect that the Democrats are using the new citizenship procedures to build up their votes.

For more than 20 years, the rising numbers of Hispanic residents has not been matched by an equal rise in the number of Hispanic voters. This gap is eroding fast, and the Democrats expect this will give them an advantage. The Republicans are running this year on a party platform which is less than friendly to immigrants, and vows a tough crackdown on illegals. A very large proportion of the people pledging their allegiance to the flag this year used to be illegals, and they have extended families who are hoping to come and partake of America's opportunity. They are unlikely to vote Republican.

New citizens tend to feel a warmth towards the president whose portrait smiles benignly over their swearing-in, and in the big cities over the past two years the Democratic party organisations have built some highly efficient systems to get the new citizens to register as Democrat.

This fits in neatly with that other Democratic reform, the Motor-Voter law which Mr Clinton passed in 1993, which makes it much easier to register to vote whenever the citizen encounters bureaucracy. Voting registration can now take place when the car licence tags are renewed each year (hence the Motor-Voter phrase) or on applying for welfare or unemployment benefits. The Democrats, reckoning that the unregistered would tend to be poor or ethnic minorities who would probably vote for them, have put a lot of effort into seizing these opportunities.

One of the most interesting figures to watch in this year's November election will be the voter turnout. It was just over 50 per cent in 1988, and just over 55 per cent in 1992, an improvement which did not much shift the widespread perception that Americans do not greatly care about participating in their democracy.

In fact, what those figures really reflect is the lamentably low rate of voter registration. On average across the US, only 68 per cent of citizens eligible to vote are actually registered. In Britain, by contrast, the registration rate is well over 90 per cent. The registration rate is even lower in some states. In California in 1992, only 57 per cent were registered, and just over 62 per cent in New York, Florida and Georgia. So if the Motor-Voter bill does its job, and if the two parties are able to deliver on their promises to improve their get-out-the-vote operations, we could see an impressive increase in the election turnout this year.

In 1992, thanks to the Rock the Vote campaign and the spirited efforts by the MTV music cable TV channel to persuade young voters to register, the 18-29 electoral cohort voted in their highest numbers since the 1972 election. This year, those efforts continue, which is probably good news for Clinton. In addition to his commanding lead among the elderly, and among women, Clinton finds his strongest support among the young. The latest Field poll in California found them preferring Clinton to Dole by the extraordinary margin of 67-28.

Americans, thrilling to the challenge of the frontier and secure behind their oceanic moats, used to say that Geography is Destiny. These days, they might be prepared to amend that old saw, and add that Demography is Politics.

Violence rules in divided Mogadishu

John Simpson in Mogadishu

MOGADISHU must be the most divided city on earth. Several distinct factions confront each other across great swaths of wrecked buildings and empty streets. There is not just one front line, there are two. In the city centre lies an area known jokingly to the Somalis as the Bermuda Triangle. If you venture in, you are unlikely to emerge alive.

There is a clear dividing line between southern Mogadishu, held by the faction of the late General Mohammed Farah Aideed, and Ali Mahdi Mohammed's northern Mogadishu. Even when there is little fighting, the line is nerve-racking to cross. In the silence of no man's land, the buildings are appallingly smashed.

Our camera crew was filming a few extra shots in no man's land for BBC Newsnight the other day. It seemed peaceful enough, but suddenly a group of militiamen turned up and arrested them. One militiaman took up a position in a doorway beside the car, put a round into the chamber of his AK-47, slid off the safety catch, and aimed at the cameraman's head.

It was then that our bodyguards earned their money. The best and toughest of them, nicknamed "Little Ears", walked quietly across to the man with the AK, took him by surprise and smashed him in the face, knocking out his front teeth. After that, the crew managed to get back to the relative safety of our hotel.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that force is the only thing that can succeed in this Hobbesian world of warfare. Nothing short of calculated violence would have sorted out that situation. For those of us who want to believe in better, more rational and peaceful ways of behaving, Mogadishu forces us to reconsider — just as it destroyed the good intentions of the United States and United Nations troops who intervened here between 1992 and 1995.

Southern Mogadishu is controlled by the militias loyal to Hussein Aideed, the US-educated son of the late general who died of wounds last month. His gunmen are reasonably well-disciplined, but they can do what they like here. As a result the streets are quiet and tense, and the shopkeepers operate nervously. At night the area is completely dark. Any European venturing out then is effectively committing suicide.

As you cross no man's land, you pass from an area where the gun is the only law to one in which the most savage punishments are restoring a kind of order. The streets of northern Mogadishu bustle with economic life, and you rarely see a gun. There are even a few policemen around, directing the traffic and ticking off small boys. At night, the streets are properly lit.

This part of the city is run by an uneasy alliance between the pragmatic Mr Ali Mahdi and the leading Islamic cleric in Somalia, Sheikh Alidheri. Two years ago, the sheikh forced through the introduction of *sharia* courts to try offenders according to Islamic law and subject them to its punishments.

These are, by Western standards, ferocious. The theft of goods worth more than about $2 means the loss of the right hand. If a gun is used in the crime, the left foot is cut off as well. As we made our way to Sheikh Alidheri's court, we came across a severed hand and foot lying abandoned in the dust. Someone had just suffered the penalty for armed robbery.

Later we obtained a tape, filmed with a small video camera, of a man having his hand and foot cut off at the sheikh's court. It is done fast but casually, and there is no anaesthetic. When we examined the pictures in a BBC cutting room in London, they were so revolting that the picture editor had to leave the room.

Realising how Westerners would react to sharia punishments, the sheikh made sure we were unable to watch a serious case. Instead, our cameraman was allowed to film a woman being tried for the theft of a dress.

The trial was fair and properly conducted, in a smallish, oppressively hot, upstairs room. After the owner of the dress had given evidence, Sheikh Alidheri turned to the accused. "Do you agree that what she says is correct?"

"Yes, and I want forgiveness," she answered.

That was impossible, but mindful of the camera the sheikh chose to be lenient. The owner of the dress had not taken proper care of her property, he found; and he sentenced the accused woman to 48 lashes.

This time the pictures were just acceptable to a Western television audience. Although the woman was frightened and weeping it was clear she was not in great pain. Without the presence of the camera the whipping might well have been a great deal fiercer.

For us, watching it all, the spectacle was ugly and degrading. Yet this ferocious, exemplary justice has quietened the streets of northern Mogadishu. We may not like the sharia courts and the punishments they inflict, but nothing the supposedly civilised world can come up with has worked as well.

John Simpson is the BBC's foreign affairs editor

Australia resists human rights clause

John Palmer in Brussels

THE UNEXPECTED refusal of the new conservative government in Canberra to commit itself to observing international human rights has thrown into confusion plans for a trade and co-operation agreement between the European Union and Australia.

Since 1992 a human rights clause has been a standard part of all EU international agreements, and has been included in pacts signed with Russia, China and countries in eastern Europe.

Under changes being negotiated in the Maastricht treaty, EU countries themselves could face expulsion from the union for serious human rights abuses. The issue is at the heart of tensions in EU relations with some of Australia's closest Asian trading partners, notably Burma, Indonesia and other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Australia's opposition to the human rights clause comes after changes in its policies on international labour standards and the global environment, which have led to conflict with other advanced industrial democracies at conferences on workers' rights and greenhouse gases.

Opposition parties denounced the government's stand as "embarrassing and humiliating" for Australia's image abroad. Human rights groups have put forward several explanations, including the recent Australian security pact signed with Indonesia, long the focus of protests for its treatment of occupied East Timor, and the government's change of policy towards Aboriginal rights.

The European Commission has been taken by surprise by the insistence of the Australian prime minister, John Howard, that the clause be removed from the proposed agreement with the EU. The issue is certain to be raised with the foreign minister, Alexander Downer, during his tour of EU capitals this week.

"No one is criticising Australia's human rights record, of which it can be justly proud. But there is no question of this clause being dropped," a Commission spokesman said. "It is in the interest of both Australia and the European Union to work together to ensure greater respect internationally for human rights."

In Brussels, diplomats said the pact had been close to final agreement but Canberra's stance on human rights had thrown it into confusion.

"I have discussed this agreement for the last 18 months with Australian officials up to the level of the foreign minister, Gareth Evans, in the previous Labour government, and met no problems at all, particularly over human rights," Hugh Kerr, Labour leader of the European Parliament delegation to Australia, said last week. "It will not do any good at all to Australia's international image to be seen to be quibbling over human rights."

India pressed to end child labour

Suzanne Goldenberg in New Delhi

AN AMERICAN human rights group appealed to India's foreign aid donors and investors, before a two-day meeting they held in Tokyo this week, to put pressure on New Delhi to end child labour.

Human Rights Watch/Asia, in a report released on Monday, accuses the Indian government of condoning child slavery by failing to enforce laws that forbid child labour.

"According to a vast and deeply entrenched set of myths, bonded labour and child labour in India are [seen as] inevitable . . . They represent the natural order of things and it is not possible to change them by force," the report states.

Estimates of working children vary, but social activists put the figure at 55 million. The government says there are 18 million child workers. Many have been put to work in payment for ancient debts which their parents or grandparents have no hope of repaying.

The report calls on donors to withdraw funding from silk cultivation projects in southern India and other industries where child labour is used. It calls on consumers overseas to demand proof that no children were involved in making products from India, especially carpets, silver trinkets and leather goods.

While the focus of Western campaigners against child labour is on goods for export, most working Indian children are on the land. Large numbers work in hazardous brick and match factories, on building sites or in quarries.

Many children are kept in horrific conditions. At the weekend, Indian newspapers carried reports on the torture of a seven-year-old boy, employed as a domestic worker by a civil servant. The boy told child labour activists his employers had stuck his hand in the cooker flame and then branded him with iron rods after he drank some milk intended for their children. Girls are at even greater risk.

Recently the government has tempered its hostility towards Western critics, and last year launched a programme to certify carpets made without child labour. The shift in attitude follows vocal protests in Europe.

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Norma breaks rank with John over privacy laws

NORMA MAJOR, the wife of the Prime Minister, suggested this week that there should be a new privacy law to protect people like her family from the intrusive long-focus lenses of press photographers when they were on private property.

Pictures of the Major family on holiday in the South of France — including one of their son, James, engaging in an amorous romp with his girlfriend — were published in a tabloid newspaper in August, but the family made no complaint to the Press Complaints Commission.

Asked whether she thought there should be a new privacy law, Mrs Major replied: "Well, I think we could certainly make a start with cameras." She thought that everybody, "whether they are in entertainment or whatever", were entitled to an element of privacy. "I don't think the public has a right to know everything and be everywhere."

The Prime Minister may well agree with her, as do a growing number of MPs on all sides of the Commons. But Mr Major and his Heritage Secretary, Virginia Bottomley, have have set their faces against any changes in the law this side of a general election for fear of upsetting the press.

Prime ministers' wives are not often the subjects of TV interviews, but Mrs Major has been with her husband on the campaign trail in recent weeks and Tory image-makers hope voters may identify more with her homely, down-to-earth approach than they will with Cherie, the high-flying lawyer wife of the Labour leader, Tony Blair.

THE POSTAL workers' union stepped up its industrial action against Royal Mail by calling another two 24-hour strikes — eight such stoppages have already been staged — this weekend and next. The union said they were precursors to "a further range of strike action aimed at bringing the dispute [over pay and working practices] to a satisfactory conclusion."

The Government responded by threatening to suspend, for a further three months, the Royal Mail's statutory monopoly on carrying letters costing under £1. This, it evidently hopes, will be a long enough period to encourage private firms to set up letter-carrying operations. The union, for its part, sees it as a form of privatisation by stealth.

The dispute has reached deadlock, after two years of negotiation, over Royal Mail's determination to introduce American-style "team working" in which team members would do the work of absent colleagues. The Labour party has pointedly refused to back the strikers and David Blunkett, the shadow employment secretary, angered them with an article in which he dubbed some union leaders as "armchair revolutionaries".

BRITAIN'S prison population is rising so rapidly that a new prison is needed every three weeks according to the director-general of the Prison Service, Richard Tilt. The number of inmates is rising at the rate of 1,000 a month, and the present total of 56,000 is up by 10 per cent over the year.

Complaining that staff morale was increasingly difficult to maintain, Mr Tilt said that about 1,500 senior staff were leaving at the end of this month under a voluntary redundancy programme designed to achieve spending cuts.

Just as Mr Tilt was warning that he might have to use police cells to relieve prison overcrowding, the Home Office announced sharp rises in the number of deaths in police custody. There were 50 such deaths in the 12 months to April, compared with 39 the year before; 36 in 1994; and 18 in 1993.

A LONG-RUNNING row over allegations of corruption and mismanagement took a new twist when 15 Labour councillors in the London borough of Hackney resigned their party membership. They complained about the "grossly inadequate" proposals by the old-guard Labour leadership for inquiring into the activities of Mark Trotter, an alleged paedophile who ran a children's home in the borough.

The rebels want public exposure of the activities of Trotter, himself a Labour activist, who died last year, and have made many other allegations about the improper conduct of council business. They did not, however, win the backing of the Labour party nationally, and five of them were barred from holding office earlier this year for allegedly behaving like "a party within a party".

THERE are now up to 1.5 million "problem gamblers" in Britain, including more than 500,000 who can be classed as "pathological or compulsive", according to research commissioned by the Home Office, which regulates gambling. A third of the compulsive gamblers spent more than 40 per cent of their annual earnings on their habit.

The Home Secretary, Michael Howard, is planning a further deregulation of gambling by allowing new casinos to open in 13 towns, relaxing the 48-hour waiting period for casino membership, and lifting current bans on advertising and credit facilities. But the researchers warned that there should be "no further deregulation until we take stock of the level of problem gamblers in Britain, and what it costs them, their families and society".

Austin

IT'S JUST A PALE IMITATION OF LENNON AND McCARTNEY'S SPLIT.

OASIS BREAK-UP

Adam Sweeting enjoys Hyde Park as the Last Night of the Proms goes open-air



"THERE'S an amazing sense of community and good nature here," effused compere Sheridan Morley, to cover the gaps while scene-shifters shoved pianos and music stands around the Hyde Park stage in London.

The Last Night of the Proms is still the last bastion of an Englishness which grows more cherished even as it becomes entirely imaginary. The traditional Last Night was going on, as sold out and saturated in Union Jacks as ever, at the Albert Hall, but for the first time, disappointed applicants were offered an alternative. For £7.50, punters could sit in Hyde Park, watch a parallel Proms first half devised for open-air consumption, then hook into the Albert Hall at 9.15pm via giant video screens for the traditional finale.

This populist leap forward makes sense for the BBC: it's a way of selling 30,000 more tickets and cashes in on the vogue for classical music in the open air.

The Proms In The Park experiment was further proof that it is virtually impossible to disentangle how much the British public loves music, and how much it is simply keen to chuck refreshments in the back of the car and spend the day in a field.

Dave, a plasterer from Wandsworth said: "I wouldn't normally bother with the Proms, but this is a bit of a laugh," he reasoned. "It's better than The Who, innit?"

Thank God it didn't rain.

PHOTOGRAPH: GAVIN SMITH

IRA calls rare convention

David Sharrock

THE fate of the Northern Ireland Troubles could be decided within a month, it was learned this weekend when security sources on both sides of the Irish border revealed that the IRA has called a rare meeting of its supreme authority, the General Army Convention.

The convention — to which representatives of all the IRA's units, commands, brigades and battalions as well as figures from its executive committee, army council and general headquarters staff will attend — may be preceded by further attacks on high-profile targets in England.

But the rarity of such a conference suggests that the IRA may have reached a point of momentous change, with hard decisions facing it on the worth of force compared with the political gains made by Sinn Fein during the peace process.

Party president Gerry Adams said: "It's the first I've heard of it. You have to ask why British military intelligence are putting out these speculative reports. It's to cause confusion in republican ranks and it's not helpful."

Mr Adams made similar remarks a week before the IRA called its ceasefire in August 1994.

The convention will elect a new IRA executive and a pool of substitute executive members to replace any of the 12 as needed. The executive in turn selects a new army council and chief of staff.

But most important of all, the convention can change the IRA's "standing orders" by a two-thirds majority. It is the only body with the power to declare a permanent end to the IRA's campaign.

In Dublin, one Garda source said: "The IRA has been organising meetings at local level around the country." These meetings were selecting representatives for the convention. "Those in favour of a new ceasefire are in the ascendant. But the hardliners who favour continuation of an armed campaign could equally swing a convention."

In Belfast, senior police officers believe the republican leadership favours ending the IRA campaign but has been meeting resistance.

● Loyalist politicians can remain at the Stormont talks table in spite of death threats by their paramilitary wings, the British and Irish governments decided last week.

Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists had threatened to withdraw unless the Progressive Unionist Party and the Ulster Democratic Party were excluded over threats against loyalist hardliner Billy Wright.

But the governments ruled that the Mitchell principles of non-violence had not been breached. Although the two parties had failed to condemn the threats, there was no evidence they endorsed it.

The DUP deputy leader, Peter Robinson, said: "It is an invitation to Sinn Fein to come through these doors without any change in the IRA's position."

Shock horror as Oasis agree to stay together

David Ward and Nick Varley

"OASIS split shock" (or was it "Oasis shock spilt"?) the black letter bill said last Thursday on a stand in Market Street presided over by Kevin Barnes, the loudest news vendor in Manchester.

His cry of "Late final!" set trembling buildings even the IRA could not budge. But his bellowings were drowned by the squeals of anguish uttered by the Failsworth Collective when they caught up with the tragedy.

Liam Gallagher leaving Oasis is as common as strong lager and stronger language but this time it seemed serious. The singer's brother Noel, aged 29, the band's songwriter and resident genius, had walked out half-way through an American tour and flown home.

The whispers were aimed at actress Patsy Kensit, Liam's girlfriend. She has been married to musicians before, and their bands ran into trouble. But Paul Gallagher, aged 32, the other brother, argued: "I'm sure Patsy had nothing to do with it. She's great. She is no Yoko Ono."

"Best band in the world. We're totally mad for it," the Failsworth girls insisted. "This stuff about the split — it's just the papers. Doesn't mean it's happening does it? They're always arguing. They'll last as long as the Beatles. Longer."

And they were right. Creation, the band's record company, noted tersely: "Oasis have had internal difficulties on their ninth tour of America, which has resulted in the tour being pulled two-thirds of the way through. It is unlikely that immediate touring commitments will be fulfilled."

But Oasis shocked no one when the much-publicised split gave way to the inevitable reconciliation.

Brothers, part-time pugilists and, some might say, prime self-publicists Noel and Liam were back together by the weekend.

But the band's hiatus will mean tours of Hawaii, Japan, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Australia before Christmas are off.

Noel, Liam and the rest of the band were intending to make a brief appearance for the media this week — if they can agree a day, a time and a place without any arguments.

Blair caught in trade union split controversy

Seumas Milne

A PERMANENT rupture between Labour and the trade unions, a relationship that has shaped British politics for most of this century, is in sight after senior party sources acknowledged that the historic link could be severed after the next election.

In the face of increasingly half-hearted Labour denials of contingency plans to cut ties, the endgame of last week's drive by Tony Blair and his lieutenants at the TUC conference to highlight the growing gap between party and unions became clear.

After Stephen Byers, Labour's employment spokesman, briefed journalists at the TUC in Blackpool on how a Labour government might respond to public sector strikes, sources close to Mr Blair emphasised that Labour-union relationship would continue to change and acknowledged that cutting the ties over time was an option, though an early breach was unlikely.

In recent years, the Labour leader has privately made no secret of his view that a modern party should part company from the unions.

Mr Byers refused to speculate on whether the unions would still have their places on Labour's national executive and vote at party conference at the end of a first term in office. He would say only that there were "no plans at the moment" to break the alliance which has put organised labour and class-based politics centre stage since the party's foundation.

Stephen Byers: briefed lobby journalists at Blackpool

Union leaders were furious at the reports, which dominated the last day of the TUC. Lew Adams, the leader of the train drivers' union, Aslef, said he was "fed up to the back teeth with the way that our conference has been persistently hijacked by politicians who keep talking about an evolving relationship with the trade unions, which keeps evolving until we disappear".

George Brumwell, general secretary of the building workers' union, Ucatt, said the threat of a breach with the unions would only benefit Arthur Scargill's breakaway Socialist Labour Party.

The reports that the Labour leadership was preparing to break the historic links in response to an expected rash of public sector strikes in the first few months of a Labour government were based on comments made by Mr Byers at a Blackpool dinner with four lobby journalists.

One senior source claimed Mr Byers, one of the Labour leader's most enthusiastic supporters, had come close to being sacked, though that was strongly denied by Mr Blair's office.

Mr Byers's briefing comes after a week of high tension between Labour and the unions at the TUC, where Mr Blunkett caused consternation by suggesting no-strike, binding arbitration agreements for the public sector and a requirement to re-ballot where an employer makes a "significant" new offer.

That was followed by a spate of rebuttals and counter-briefings. But there was also little doubt that Labour politicians had gone to the TUC to provoke a high-profile row.

In the same week the TUC defied a last-minute plea for unity on the minimum wage when Congress overwhelmingly backed a call for £4.26 ($6.50) an hour — saddling the leadership with a precise figure it had been desperate to avoid.

After the most intense debate of the week, in which union leaders openly sniped at each other from the platform, delegates voted by a 90 per cent majority for both the Unison-led £4.26 motion, and a leadership-backed motion supporting existing policy of a minimum wage, but not setting a precise figure.

In the highly charged atmosphere of the Winter Gardens, John Edmonds, general secretary of the GMB general union, led the attack against setting a figure with a vitriolic speech attacking both Unison and the Socialist Labour Party.

He said that backing the motion would be an ideological move which would not make Labour set a figure. "That risk might be worth taking if today's vote put extra money into the purses and pockets of the low paid. But surely no one believes we should run that risk for the sake of putting a few extra lines into the Congress report, or to give a bit of publicity to Arthur's new and very exclusive political party."

But Rodney Bickerstaffe, general secretary of the public sector union Unison, responded with a speech that brought supporters to their feet as he hit back at Mr Edmonds: "After 30 lonely years working for a minimum wage I will not be lectured to by Johnny-Come Lately's."

He said the union movement had won the argument for a minimum wage and must now set a figure. "We're not asking for favours, we are asking for fairness . . . the minimum wage is the defining issue of trade unions. If we don't believe that we might as well pack up and go home."

He dismissed claims that setting a figure could damage Labour's election prospects, saying: "We are not in the pockets of the Labour party and [it] is not in the pockets of the unions."

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Labour restores poll lead

Martin Kettle

CONSERVATIVE hopes that the Government's summer recovery would continue into the autumn were dashed last week as Labour reopened a 15-point lead in the latest opinion poll.

Labour has increased its lead over the Tories by three points, according to the September Guardian-ICM opinion poll.

After four successive months in which the Conservatives had eaten into Labour's lead, Labour have reopened the 15-point advantage it held in July. This will help to calm party fears that fierce Tory propaganda campaigns might be eroding Labour's long-standing poll advantage.

The adjusted survey results show Labour on 47 per cent (up 2 points compared with August), Conservatives 32 (down 1), Liberal Democrats 16 (down 3), and others 5 (up 2). Labour's lead is up three points compared with August.

On the unadjusted figures — which take no account of voters' reluctance to admit to supporting the Conservatives — the September results show Labour on 51 per cent (up 1), Conservatives 28 (down 2), Liberal Democrats 15 (down 3), and others 5 (up 2). Labour's lead is up 3.

Although Labour has had a difficult summer, marked by arguments about Tony Blair's leadership style and an embarrassing row about Scottish devolution, the party has notched up its best adjusted ICM rating since April (when it recorded 50 per cent support) and has maintained its record of never falling below 45 per cent since Mr Blair became leader two years ago.

The poll was taken before the TUC conference at Blackpool.

Heads seek right to expel

John Carvel

HEAD teachers have demanded sweeping powers to expel troublesome pupils without interference from "emotional" school governors.

As the row continues over the fate of a 10-year-old accused of disrupting Manton junior school in Worksop, Nottinghamshire, they said heads should have complete authority to decide when a school can no longer be reasonably expected to cope with an unruly child.

The association called on Gillian Shephard, the Education and Employment Secretary, to remove parents' right to go to an appeals panel to challenge a pupil's exclusion if the school's head, governors and the local authority agreed that the child was unduly disruptive.

But neither the governors nor the local authority should be allowed to make a fresh judgment about the facts, only check that the head teacher followed correct procedures.

Mr Hart condemned the "ludicrous situation" at Manton, where governors overruled the head's decision to expel 10-year-old Matthew Wilson and brought in a personal tutor, costing £14,000 a year. Not surprisingly, most teachers and parents opposed the move, as there would have to be cuts in books, equipment or even a normal teaching job to balance the budget.

The number of children needing special help for behavioural or learning difficulties is soaring. Local education authorities say they need increased funding to cope with a 40 per cent rise in children with special educational needs.

● A five-year-old primary school pupil has been excluded from a school in Essex after carrying out 30 assaults on staff and pupils.

Anguished bishop resigns

Peter Hetherington

LEADERS of the Roman Catholic church in Scotland on Monday urged the runaway Bishop of Argyll and the Isles to show penitence and remain in the priesthood after a week of unprecedented drama involving hierarchy and priests.

Bishop Roderick Wright, appointed five years ago to the Highland diocese, finally emerged late on Sunday after a week in hiding to tell Cardinal Thomas Winning, head of the church in Scotland, that he was "physically and spiritually unable" to sustain his responsibilities.

"He was very insistent on expressing his deep, deep sorrow and regret for the hurt he had caused by his sudden disappearance, and he insisted on resigning," said Cardinal Winning.

He said that there was no chance of the 56-year-old bishop remaining in his post. He had tendered his resignation to the Pope.

Cardinal Winning spoke candidly and with some irritation about the bishop's long-standing relationship with Mrs Kathleen Macphee, a 40-year-old nurse from near Fort William who went missing about the same time as the bishop, leaving her youngest child with relatives.

It was clear the hierarchy felt that Bishop Wright had crossed the boundaries of clerical morality some time ago and had a clear choice to make: give up Mrs Macphee as a first step towards rehabilitation.

Cardinal Winning emphasised that Bishop Wright had no intention of giving up the Church. "In fact, I would still hope that he will continue sometime, somewhere his ministry as a priest — we both felt in his heart of hearts he probably would want to do that."

Without compromising on points of principle, he said that at a time of personal crisis the Church had to show compassion to a man who apparently accepted, under great strain, that he might have been unsuitable for a senior role in the Church after a long period of self-examination.

Asked bluntly if the bishop could continue as a priest if he had had a relationship with the woman, Cardinal Winning said: "Well, it depends what you mean by a relationship. You can go to confession, you know. There's a church of sinners . . . there's many a fallen person who is penitent enough . . ."

The cardinal was insistent, however, that celibacy remained an essential, almost crucial, feature of the priesthood.

"The fact that we have celibacy is to make us totally available to other people . . . the fact that lapses do occur does not mean to say that we have to abandon celibacy."

But it is clear that these comments go to the heart of what seems to have been a growing rift between Bishop Wright and the Church.

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In Brief

DOUGLAS HOGG, the agriculture minister, was bluntly told in Brussels that there was no chance of other European countries agreeing to his calls for cuts to the slaughter figure of 147,000 high-risk cattle.

BRITISH diplomat Robert Coghlan, jailed for smuggling child pornography from Japan, has been dismissed by the Foreign Office.

A FOOD firm which put children as young as 10 to work in its factory for up to six hours a day has been fined £14,000.

PETER MARTIN, a Manchester model agency owner and associate of the disgraced millionaire Owen Oyston, was jailed for 20 years for raping and sexually assaulting teenage girls.

POLICE sealed off a nationalist area of Belfast after Sean Devlin was shot in a punishment killing by Direct Action Against Drugs. The group, believed to be a cover for the IRA, has claimed responsibility for seven other murders in Northern Ireland in the past 18 months.

SEBASTIAN COE resigned as honorary president of the National Pistol Association following accusations that it had mounted a smear campaign against the father of a girl who died in the Dunblane massacre. In a separate incident parents of the victims attacked a newspaper advertising campaign by the British Shooting Sports Council which suggests that all gun owners face being penalised for Thomas Hamilton's killings.

THE Government is considering a crackdown on chequebook journalism, including a possible new criminal offence of making payments to likely witnesses in criminal trials.

VICTIMS of sexual and physical abuse, and their alleged attackers, may be allowed to speak anonymously to a tribunal investigating incidents at children's homes in North Wales.

THE Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, their children and advisers, have been discussing at Balmoral the shape of the family's future public role and their duties.

REZA AFSHAR, a 17-year-old boy, born and brought up in Britain, was snatched by officials in Tehran as he was boarding a flight home after a holiday. The officials say he is eligible for two years' national service.

ABOUT 250,000 young people were homeless in the UK at some stage last year, according to an inquiry headed by Andreas Whittam Smith, former editor of the Independent, and commissioned by 10 charities.

BBC axes programme on airline

Andrew Culf

A SECOND Newsnight report involving allegations against British Airways has been dropped by the BBC to the anger of journalists.

The BBC denied the decision to axe the report on alleged anti-competitive trusts — and another film on "dirty tricks" against Richard Branson's Virgin — had been taken by John Birt, the director general.

Mr Birt has reportedly had talks with Sir Tim Bell, head of Lowe Bell public relations, adviser to British Airways and, until recently, the BBC. He is also a friend of Robert Ayling, chief executive of British Airways. They both have holiday cottages in Hay-on-Wye, Powys, and go walking in the Brecon Beacons.

Newsnight ran a report by a freelance reporter, Martyn Gregory, in August 1994 about an alleged dirty tricks campaign by British Airways. Mr Birt faxed Tony Hall, chief executive of BBC News, critcising the rigour of its journalism.

A half-hour film by Mr Gregory — carrying new allegations from John Gorman, a former police officer who claimed threat and harassment by BA — was then pulled.

Simultaneously, Mr Gregory had been preparing another film on alleged anti-competitive practices by the airline, which took on added significance after the merger in June between BA and American Airlines.

Mr Gregory said: "I was told that the 'anti-trust' film was dropped. The reason given was that the John Gorman film was to be aired. Now it appears neither are to be screened. It is very difficult to understand what is happening at the BBC."

● Baroness Hogg, the former head of John Major's Downing Street policy unit, is one of five experts who could determine the fate of the BBC World Service.

The panel will assess evidence from the BBC, the Foreign Office and World Service campaigners about the impact of Mr Birt's BBC reorganisation.

The four other members are David Glencross, former chief executive of the Independent Television Commission; John Wilson, controller of BBC editorial policy until 1993; Stephen Claypole, managing director of the television news agency APTV, and Nicholas Colchester, editorial director of the Economist Intelligence Unit since 1993.



Food for thought . . . Critics claim London's pigeons are disease-ridden vermin PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

Pigeons' fate up in the air in Trafalgar Square

THE Department of National Heritage is considering drastic measures against a London tourist landmark — the pigeons in Trafalgar Square. A report being considered by the department suggests a range of controls for the birds, from poison to wires preventing roosting, *writes Maev Kennedy*.

The pigeon population of the square, the only public space in central London where feeding is permitted, is estimated at between 200,000 and 1.5 million. Recent reports claim that diseases including TB and organisms causing food poisoning and skin infections have been detected among the birds.

The department spends £100,000 a year on daily cleaning, removing up to a ton of pigeon droppings, while at the same time licensing a seed vendor to sell pigeon feed to tourists.

Generations of tourists have been photographed with the birds perching on their hands, shoulders or hats, to the incredulity of bodies such as the Civic Trust which regards them as vermin with wings. The Trust is calling for falcons in Trafalgar Square to eliminate the pigeons.

Free tuition for students under threat

John Carvel

STUDENTS would have to repay more than £20,000 towards the cost of their university degree under proposals likely to be agreed this week by vice-chancellors, who are preparing to abandon the fundamental principle of free tuition for full-time undergraduates.

In the face of a mounting financial crisis, the universities have put together a plan to raise an extra £6 billion a year by transferring a large slice of the funding for higher education from the government to graduates.

They want students to take out loans averaging £2,400 a year to cover about a third of tuition costs. The current system of maintenance grants and short-term loans would be scrapped in favour of a more substantial long-term maintenance loan worth £4,475 a year throughout the period of study. Together these debts would leave the average graduate qualifying after a three-year degree course owing £20,625, at today's prices.

The money would be repaid through a supplementary National Insurance levy at about 3 per cent of taxable income. Typically graduates would discharge their debts over 20 years or more in employment, but those on very low incomes might never complete the repayments.

The proposal is expected to be agreed at the annual conference of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals in Sheffield. It takes the form of a recommendation to the government inquiry into higher education under Sir Ron Dearing.

Sir Ron is due to present a blueprint for universities in the 21st century shortly after the general election. Although the universities could not implement the scheme without legislation, the proposals to shift more of the cost of higher education to graduates would be a powerful temptation to the incoming government. The CVCP thinks the changes are unlikely to come into force for four years.

Labour and the Liberal Democrats have already called for reform of student maintenance to abolish the traditional grant in favour of a more generous loan, available on a pro rata basis to part-time students and others who do not qualify for help under the present system.

Douglas Trainer, president of the National Union of Students, said he understood the vice-chancellors' problems, but they should not pass the buck to students.

"We are appalled at having to foot the whole bill for neglect by the Government."

● After months of abortive negotiations with Barclays and Clydesdale, Gillian Shephard, the Education and Employment Secretary has dropped her plans for the banks to offer subsidised loans to students, in competition with the Treasury-backed Student Loans Company.

Britain 'failing' in its human rights duties

Richard Norton-Taylor

BRITAIN is guilty of more than 40 violations of its international human rights obligations, according to a "democratic audit" to be published this week.

The most serious violations, it says, are the absence of constitutional and judicial safeguards relating to privacy and equal protection under the law. But failures range from lack of freedom of information to the use of the security services in Northern Ireland.

The audit, The Three Pillars of Liberty — Parliament, the Courts and Public Opinion — was drawn up by the Human Rights Centre at the University of Essex using benchmarks including the European Convention On Human Rights and the United Nations Covenant on Civil And Political Rights.

Britain's traditional legal, constitutional and political arrangements fail to protect civil liberties and "do not fully ensure that an effective remedy is provided", says the report. Since 1975 the European Court of Human Rights has ruled against Britain in 42 cases — in 25 as a result of acts passed by Parliament, in a further 10 as a result of secondary legislation. These violations are historic: the audit has found a further 42 current and continuing violations of obligations.

It acknowledged that Britain is a liberal democracy, free from widespread and gross violations of human rights. But it says that Britain's traditional legal, constitutional, and political arrangements fail to protect political rights and freedoms effectively. That failure, it says, is systemic and no single group — whether judges, civil servants or politicians — was to blame.

It points the finger at the lack of a written constitution and the doctrine of "parliamentary sovereignty" with party discipline ensuring that governments dominate the Commons. "Britain's secretive regime severely limits MPs' powers to hold ministers accountable," the report says. It adds: "Scrutiny of new legislation is partisan and largely nominal."

Parliament, it says, "has neither the will nor the resources to check the mass of secondary legislation — codes, guidance — which pours through every year and continually extends ministerial and official power".

It says the problems are compounded by Britain's political culture — a traditional emphasis on public order and strong government.

Professor Kevin Boyle, director of Essex university's human rights centre, said the audit revealed a "disturbing neglect of basic civil and political rights in Britain". He has written to Lord Mackay, the Lord Chancellor, asking him to conduct an immediate review of British law and constitutional procedures to ensure they met the country's obligations.

The Lord Chancellor's department said it would respond in due course.

Tony Wright, the Labour MP for Cannock and Burntwood who is known to be close to Tony Blair, said the Commons should set up a human rights committee to scrutinise planned legislation.

Bus pensioners to win £200m payout

Keith Harper and Richard Miles

THOUSANDS of National Bus pensioners are in line for a £200 million payout after it emerged this week that the Government was guilty of raiding the company's pension scheme when it was privatised 10 years ago.

The pensions ombudsman, Julian Farrand — appointed by the Social Services Secretary, Peter Lilley, to investigate complaints from the public — has instructed trustees to "take all possible steps" to recover the money from the Treasury.

Bus pensioners could gain by up to £1,000 a year after trustees disperse the money "with interest windfall", unless ministers appeal against the ruling, although industry sources suggest this would be unlikely to succeed.

The Government plundered the fund's huge surpluses when the industry was privatised in 1986. Later, the National Audit Office ruled the bulk of the money raised from the National Bus sell-off came from the winding up of the pension fund.

It is not the first time that the Government has pocketed the surplus in the pension scheme of a privatised company. In 1994, it took an estimated £2 billion out of the former British Coal pension funds in return for a guarantee that pensions would be linked to the rate of inflation.

The ruling comes as the Department of Social Security is pushing through reforms to protect the members of company pension schemes from unscrupulous employers following the Robert Maxwell scandal, where thousands of workers' pensions were siphoned off to prop up the media mogul's business empire.

David Brindle adds: The Government is due to reject the recommendations of an independent inquiry which calls for a compulsory insurance scheme to meet the costs of caring for the growing numbers of Britain's elderly.

Ministers are dismissing the idea as a "new and unfair tax", and say the system required to administer it would be complex and prohibitively expensive.

The Labour party is also distancing itself from the prospect of a new earnings levy, put provisionally at 1.5 per cent of income. However, shadow ministers say they will study the proposals of the inquiry set up by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

The long-awaited report says that action is needed to prepare for a surge in numbers of elderly people in 20 years' time and to meet concern that the existing system of financing long-term care is unfair. It takes issue with the Commons health select committee, which claimed the implications of population trends had been overstated.



The Washington Post

Muslims Afraid to Vote in East Bosnia

John Pomfret in Konjevic Polje

THE LAST TIME Harija Cozic saw the rolling hills of eastern Bosnia was July 11, 1995. After Serb forces rampaged through the town of Srebrenica, Cozic and more than 30,000 Muslim women, children and elderly people were packed into buses and flatbed trucks and expelled to territory held by the Muslim-led Bosnian government.

For the last four miles of the trip, they were forced to walk. A trail of tears snaked through the countryside. Meanwhile, Serb gunmen are believed to have slaughtered up to 8,000 Muslim men caught in and around Srebrenica, allegedly on the orders of their military chief, Gen. Ratko Mladic. One of them was Cozic's brother. Another was her father. Another was her cousin. Another was her uncle.

Last Saturday, Cozic, dressed in her somewhat threadbare Sunday best, returned to a war-ravaged field west of Bratunac, her home town, to vote in Bosnia's nationwide elections. At a polling station in a burned-out, two-story house that used to belong to a Muslim, now dead, Cozic cast her ballot with quiet dignity.

Serb policemen surrounded the site. Cozic and several other Muslims identified some of them as the gunmen who had driven them out of their homes in Bratunac in 1992, forcing them to take refuge in doomed Srebrenica, which is about six miles south. A platoon of U.S. Army military police stood by in case of trouble.

One of the Muslim women picked a bouquet of wildflowers after casting her vote. "I'll dry these and think of home all winter," said Zehra Ferhadbegovic, 49, an electrical engineer, with tears in her eyes. "This was my vote to come home," she said.

Directly across from the polling place, in a verdant valley amid rolling hills, lay a mass grave from which international war crimes investigators exhumed more than 80 bodies earlier this year. They had all been shot in the back of the head. All were believed to have come from Srebrenica.

As many as 8,000 Muslims from around Srebrenica and the neighboring town of Bratunac had been expected to return on Saturday to vote. But as of late Saturday afternoon only two buses, carrying 31 people altogether, had arrived from Muslim-held ground. Indeed, throughout Bosnia, the number of people crossing from the Muslim-Croat federation to the Serb side was far less than expected.

Western election officials had predicted that between 30,000 and 110,000 people would cross the lines. In all, only 350 to 400 buses, carrying no more than 20,000 people, did so. Those low numbers seemed to cheer Bosnian Serb officials, who had spent the war trying to carve out a separate state.

"That means they'll never come home," said a Serb policeman who identified himself only as Brane but acknowledged that he had forced some of those very voters from their homes.

There are several reasons why so few people joined Cozic in her courageous trip into the Serbs' stronghold. First, in August, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which is supervising Bosnia's elections, postponed *a key part of them — voting* for municipal offices — because ultranationalist Serbs had engaged in widespread electoral fraud.

Bosnia's municipal elections are particularly important to people expelled from areas where they used to be in the majority, like the Muslims of eastern Bosnia. In theory, when these elections occur, Muslims will be able to return to such areas and elect their local representatives, in effect overturning at the ballot box the Serbs' military victory. Thus, Western officials hypothesized that Muslims are waiting for the municipal voting — which will probably be held in November — to cross the lines.

But other reasons point to bad organization, which has wracked the OSCE's electoral work over the past nine months.

Serbs, in consultation with the OSCE, picked out two polling stations that were "recommended" for *the Muslims around Srebrenica.* Serb police declared they would not guarantee Muslim voters security elsewhere.

One station was here in Konjevic Polje, across the street from a mass grave, in the heart of the Serbs' killing fields. The other location was even stranger — Zutica, a muddy village whose name, in English, means jaundice.

There the polling station sat in a garage more than 300 feet from the main road. Voters would have to negotiate a slippery, muddy trail that at times ran perilously close to a raging river, swollen with last week's rains. Then they would have to deal with Miro Pejic. Pejic is the chief of the Zutica polling station, approved for his post by the OSCE.

As a practical joke, Pejic and his colleagues, five other Serb men, had placed several pigs in a room next to the polling station. As they waited for Muslims to arrive, the *men giggled and cursed as the pigs* squealed and oinked. Pork is shunned by followers of Islam.

"I guess all the Turks are dead," Pejic said, employing a Serb slur for Bosnia's Muslim men. "Anyway, I want some fresh meat. My wife gave birth 20 days ago, so I'm not allowed sex at home. Maybe a young Muslim girl will give me what I need. After she votes, of course."

His colleagues laughed uproariously.

Pejic turned serious, though, when the talk turned to politics. One of the candidates for the presidency of the Serb half of Bosnia was not a real citizen, so he should not be on the ballot, Pejic declared.

That candidate is Nedzo Dzuric, a Muslim.

Why wasn't he a real citizen?

"Because he's not living here," Pejic said.

But Dzuric was expelled by Serb gunmen.

"He's still not a citizen," Pejic said.

But why?

"Because he's a Turk," Pejic said

Only one Muslim voted on Saturday at Pejic's station.

A woman and child sit by election posters in Sarajevo. Despite the the full deployment onf NATO troops there was a poor Muslim voter turnout in Serb-held parts of Bosnia

Fraud Over Chemical Weapons

OPINION
Lally Weymouth

IF THE Clinton administration succeeds in persuading the Senate to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention, the mere fact of a new treaty will not help the United States combat the spread of this weapon of mass destruction.

Indeed, this particular treaty may do the reverse: Some of the treaty's opponents argue convincingly that it would actually increase the trade in chemical agents with military application.

Certainly, it would facilitate the establishment of an unnecessary international regulatory agency with unlimited police powers over thousands of U.S. companies that produce chemicals that could be used to make weapons.

Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Arizona, agrees with the majority staff of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations: Of course a verifiable treaty that *achieved real reductions in chemical* weapons would serve U.S. national-security interests. But, argues Kyl, this treaty isn't verifiable. Nor would it reduce the chemical arsenals in countries U.S. officials deem most likely to use such war tools against America and its allies: Libya, Syria, North Korea and Iraq. Not surprisingly, these rogue states have refused to sign on to the regime.

In fact, not one country of concern to the United States on the chemical-weapons front has ratified this convention: not the People's Republic of China, Iran, Cuba or even Russia, which has signed but not ratified and is said to possess one of the most sophisticated chemical arsenals in the world.

Treaty proponents argue that the convention would enable the United States to gather intelligence on other countries' chemical-weapons programs. But Sen. Kyl calls such benefits "marginal," and says, "It's not worth the price."

If the treaty is ratified, moreover, the United States will have to pick up a considerable part of the setup costs of a massive new international regulatory body in the Hague. This *superagency* would be empowered to subject U.S. businesses to routine or "challenge" inspections of sites that allegedly might contain chemical weaponry or its key ingredients.

The inspection teams that will enter U.S. plants if this convention is ratified could have representatives from states such as France and Japan, for example, that practice industrial espionage. Ironically, Washington also will have to foot some of the bills for these inspections, which experts believe may violate the constitutional rights of U.S. companies and citizens. American companies also would have to provide continuing, time-consuming reports.

Negotiations on the treaty began under President Reagan; the accord was seen then as a verifiable, global ban on chemical weapons. As time passed, the purposes changed. Arms-control experts concluded that constitutional rights clashed with the need to verify. There would have to be a compromise. The balance that was struck, according to Kyl, adversely affects the United States: While the convention doesn't catch and punish many countries that have secret chemical-weapons programs, it ends up imposing heavy costs and constitutional burdens on the United States.

Dole's Treaty Turnabout

EDITORIAL

FOR THE better part of a decade then-Senator Robert Dole was a part of the legion of Republicans, including President Ronald Reagan and President George Bush, James Baker and Brent Scowcroft, who supported writing a treaty to outlaw poison gas.

Last week, on the eve of a Senate vote on ratification, Dole indicated that he had changed his mind.

It is hard to believe the political campaign had nothing to do with the candidate's flip-flop, although Dole does cite reasons. He suggests he had reservations about the treaty's coverage — the rogue states that are its prime target will surely reject it — and about its enforceability, which under the best of circumstances will not be foolproof.

Others who are not running for office have also cited these views, but we think there are strong arguments against them. The treaty does not immediately reach the rogues, but it does create a legal and political framework in which they can be better isolated and pursued.

Dole cites the situation of American chemical companies, which, he believes, would suffer under unacceptably intrusive inspection obligations.

But the companies themselves have greeted the treaty as a welcome and bearable liberation of their exports from the onus of contributing to rogue chemical stocks.

The treaty has been pulled, not killed. In other political circumstances, it can be sent back to the Senate. But meanwhile the ratifications of other states will bring it into effect. As a result, the American government will be frozen out of the treaty's initial application — this can only warm the poison-gas crowd — and the American chemical industry will risk a cutoff of tens of billions of dollars in exports.

We don't believe that's in the United States' national interest, or Dole's, for that matter.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
September 22 1996

Labour outgrows its union roots

IN 1900, when the Labour party was formed, fewer than three men in every five had the vote, women did not have the vote at all, and the legal rights of working people and their organisations were vestigial. The Labour party was created to defend these excluded millions and to win them rights and security. Half a century later, those goals had been essentially achieved, partly but by no means entirely as a result of the Labour party's own actions.

There are many reasons why Labour has failed to carry these achievements as far in the second half of the 20th century as it managed to do in the first. Nevertheless, there can be little dispute that Labour's failure to make itself into what Harold Wilson called the natural party of government is bound up with its long inability to extend its support sufficiently beyond the labour movement from which it originally sprang. One of the reasons for this has been the inability of the party to redefine its relationship with the trades unions, which remain the party's principal paymasters.

Everyone who is anxious to end the long years of Conservative government is well aware of this continuing problem, and so are most (though not all) people who are active in both the unions and the party. Many things have been done to modernise a relationship which only a complete conservative would argue should remain untouched. Unions have become more accountable to their members. The party has become less overwhelmingly dependent on union power and wealth. The culture and purposes of the two movements have become less similar than they once were

This is not a relationship in which everything that the party does is good and everything that the unions do is bad. But it is without question a relationship which needed to change and which needs to evolve still further if Labour is either to succeed in forming a new majority or to deserve to do so. After 17 years of anti-union government, it is inevitable that many union activists want to see a swing to pro-union government. But two wrongs do not make a right, even when one of them is arguably the lesser of two evils. Most people think trades unions are valuable and necessary institutions, as indeed they are. But that does not mean they want to be governed by the unions or to see the unions acting as though they own the government.

The TUC conference last week echoed to this still unresolved argument. The fact that the squalls took place so noisily shows that the two partners have not yet evolved the kind of relationship which would best benefit them both and which the country generally desires. The party is not blameless for this situation, but too many in the unions seem to believe that Labour politicians should speak only those lines that the unions write for them. Last week's events are a necessary lesson that this can never be the case again. Stephen Byers may have exceeded his brief with some of his claims, but he was only taking part in a discussion which needs to go further. The suggestion that this might be considered a sacking matter, as proposed by John Edmonds, only illustrates how far there is to go.

Bosnia: too little and too late?

THE BOSNIAN elections, says President Clinton, were "remarkable", but remarkable for what? Though they were held with little violence, large numbers of people were unable to vote. Only 20,000 refugees managed to cross the line into the Bosnian Serbs' territory — though up to 150,000 had been expected. The test of the exercise lies not in the actual result, which can only reflect Bosnia's ethnic polarisation. It lies in whether the election reduces, rather than increases, the threat of actual Serb secession.

The Serbs were told sharply last week, by a senior adviser to High Commissioner Carl Bildt, that "secession is not an option". There have been comforting forecasts that a breakaway Republika Srpska could not survive on its own — and it is certainly true that once prosperous Serb-held cities such as Prijedor now have empty shops and derelict streets, and that the victorious nationalist Serb parties will have their hands full coping with economic disaster. Yet secession offers a useful morale-raising diversion, and the notion of a separate state has been prominent in most of the Serb campaigning. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, in its supervisory role, took only token and tardy action to ban such propaganda.

The paradox of the Dayton agreement was there from the start. An accord designed to maintain the unity of Bosnia divided it into two separate "entities". The weekend's election will create new joint and constituent representative bodies side by side which could usher in a potentially more dangerous phase as the weakness of these new institutions is revealed. If the tripartite presidency fails to function, then that will doom any prospect of legal and administrative reality. In any case the Dayton formula entrusts the bulk of administrative power to the two constituent entities — the Muslim-Croat federation and the Republika Srpska. If the joint arrangement fails, separatism will triumph with or without any formal declaration of independence.

The situation on the ground is hardly encouraging. Few Muslims ventured into Bosnian Serb territory to vote as they were entitled to. Those who did so were under escort by Nato soldiers, and were greatly outnumbered by the Serbs who came from Serbia proper to vote. A new image now joins the gallery of sadness created by the Bosnian war — that of the Muslim who returns to his or her native town under armed guard, and is not even allowed to turn off the main street to inspect the family home.

US and European officials have promised to move into high gear now that the elections are over, and focus on how to continue international involvement in Bosnia in the New Year. But nothing can be formally decided till after the US presidential election. All will depend on another London conference in early December, which will not even have the status of a second Dayton. The odds are still depressingly in favour of the international effort being once again too little and too late.

Choice would be a fine thing

THE BISHOP of Argyll's resignation will fuel the debate which is already rampant within the Catholic Church over the celibacy of the priesthood. Pope John Paul II has said there is nothing to be discussed on the matter; any bishops who dare to hint that they differ face being summoned to Rome to have their knuckles rapped. What is astonishing is the gulf between the Pontiff and the vast body of the Church. Most Catholics consider it is only a matter of time before celibacy for the priesthood becomes optional.

The overriding imperative for this monumental change is that the Catholic Church is facing a critical shortage of priests. In Europe, the number of vocations has been declining for decades, and a third of parishes are already without a resident priest. That proportion is expected to rise sharply because the age structure of the priesthood is heavily weighted towards the over-60s. Those running seminaries and training colleges say that celibacy is a deterrent to men who might otherwise be interested in the priesthood.

Advocates of a married priesthood can draw on history to justify this about-face. In the early Christian church, priests could choose to be celibate or to marry, and some of the great theologian bishops of Constantinople were married men with children. It was not until 1139 that Rome imposed celibacy as a requirement for the priesthood. By contrast, the Orthodox churches' priests have always been able to marry. It is not that the Catholic Church needs to move with the times — merely to revert to ancient traditions. There never has been and still isn't any theological underpinning to the celibacy requirement — Jesus Christ says nothing on the subject. Indeed it is possible to read the decision in the 12th century as a pragmatic move to preserve church property from being dispersed through inheritance.

For centuries, Catholic priests have struggled with celibacy. What a series of scandals in Ireland and North America have done over the past decade is to expose the seemy underside of this harsh rule — the frustrated sexuality erupting in child sex abuse, the hidden relationships with women and priests' denial of the illegitimate children they father, as well as the loneliness of priests who turn to alcoholism. About 1,000 priests have left the British priesthood to marry in recent decades; many are talented, deeply dedicated men whom the Church can ill afford to lose.

How Nazi gold turned history into litigation

David Cesarani

ONE of the intriguing questions arising from the latest "revelations" about the conduct of Swiss banks during and after the second world war is why it took so long for this particular chapter of history to hit the headlines. The fuss also says a great deal about our relationship to the past.

Like many of the recent stories from the Nazi era, it hinges on "secrets" and "new" documentation. It shares a common theme with other controversies that revolve around property and questions of restitution or compensation, such as the contested ownership of looted artworks held in Russia. The magnetic power of these issues suggests that the generations for whom the war is distant history can most easily relate to it through sensationalism and by analogy with current preoccupations, such as fiscal probity.

Of course, there are many banal reasons why some episodes of history remain inaccessible for ages, particularly in Britain with its culture of official secrecy. Comprehensive histories can only be written when researchers have access to all the source material including contemporary reports, memoirs, oral history and official documents generally released after a lapse of 30 years. Intelligence sources are the last to be disclosed, but they rarely add more than detail to the existing picture. The story of Nazi gold is a case in point. The official documentation concerning the financial blockade of Nazi Germany and the hunt for looted gold was released into the public domain in Britain in the late 1970s and was soon used by economic historians working on the war years. In 1989 the American historian Arthur L Smith published an admirable account of how the Nazis plundered Europe's central banks, how the Allies tracked down the gold, recovered it and parcelled it out. Despite the "new" documents and access to classified material, the recent Foreign Office report adds marginally to this study.

To most people, however, it is news, and the media have cultivated the spurious notion that no one knew these facts until they "revealed" them. They have fed the appetite of a public which can only connect with the past when it is something happening now.

Ours is an age of hyper-fashion and instant gratification in which anything "old" is staid and boring. The past can only be "brought to life" if it is new. The only bits of the past that qualify for this treatment are "secrets", events or their causes that were unknown when they happened and have since been "hidden".

Anyone watching a documentary or reading an article in which "secret history" is revealed participates in its unfolding. We were not "there", but "there" is now, here, in our newspaper or on our TV screen.

Even solid historians find they must play this game, selling their projects to trade and academic publishers as "a major new revision" or work "based on previously unseen documents", often from "newly opened former Soviet archives". This results in an inflation of expectations amongst the public. It also fosters suspicion and paranoia. If it is "new" 50 years later, why was it concealed?

The sense of betrayal is especially acute amongst the losers in history. Yet the recent vociferousness of Jewish survivors of Nazi genocide has other sources than anger that their shabby treatment was covered up or ignored for so long.

We live in a culture of complaint and compensation. Fifty years ago, the vast majority of Holocaust survivors picked themselves up and started new lives. Some went home initially to see if they could recover their houses or property, but many wrote it off. They were glad just to be alive, and too trained in cynicism to expect fair treatment.

When Israel negotiated a reparations agreement with West Germany in the 1950s, thousands of survivors rioted outside the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, condemning the deal as "blood money". Nothing could give them back their former lives or compensate for lost loved ones. Such a response is barely credible in today's climate when we are all "survivors" and everyone is a potential litigant.

Jews are not alone in this quest for recompense. Germans expelled from the Sudetenland by the Czechoslovak government after the war are escalating their demands for the restoration of lost land and property. The victims of communist expropriation in Central and Eastern Europe are clamouring for restitution. And let us not forget the British survivors of the Japanese labour camps.

IN THESE, and similar, cases history has been reduced to litigation. The object of memory, the past, has become the memory of objects: land, property, cash. This makes the past instantly accessible to the amnesiac readers of the newspapers and the viewers of Secret History. It all makes sense: or does it?

Much of this history-as-news is driven by stereotypes. The story of Nazi gold appears logical due to the concatenation of symbols. The association of Jews with gold is a basic anti-Semitic stereotype. In fact, the vast mass of Jews murdered by the Nazis were poor people living in Poland, the Baltic states or the USSR. The wealth looted from them was insignificant compared with the tons of gold plundered by the Nazis from the central banks of vanquished countries. This is precisely why in 1945-6 the Allies washed their hands of "non-monetary gold": it was more trouble to recover than it was worth to them, although for the survivors it was all they might have had.

The image of the malevolent "gnomes of Zurich" serves automatically to explain Swiss conduct. But the Swiss faced real dilemmas of neutrality during the war, and the Allies, as well as the Nazis, used their services.

It is a depressing thought, but the popularity of many stories left over from the Nazi era may be explained finally because they allow us to express moral indignation about Realpolitik and business practice without tackling the instances of treachery and exploitation occurring under our noses today.

David Cesarani is Professor of Modern Jewish History at Southampton University and Director of the Wiener Library, London

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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World Bank faces crisis over state aid

Sarah Ryle assesses efforts to maintain Third World funding while **Alex Brummer** (below) finds the IMF struggling with a drop in liquidity



Abandoned . . . Aid agencies say Mozambique would be in dire straits if driven to rely on private investors to fund hospitals and schools PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

THE World Bank has admitted that it is fighting a losing battle with Western governments over aid to the world's poorest countries and is secretly looking for ways to use private capital to replace the lost funds.

A top-level ad hoc panel which was set up earlier this year by James Wolfensohn, the president of the Bank, to discuss how to offset the anticipated decline in government aid has suggested private-sector investment is the only viable alternative.

"The panel believes that government aid has gone out of fashion and will never reach traditional levels again," a senior source said. "So far, the only concrete alternative is investment from the markets. That would mean forming new guidelines to make sure that investment was properly used by the governments who received it.

"The World Bank could not be a police force, but it could influence the way money is lent or invested." There are long-standing fears that aid is misused, particularly for military purposes, by Third World dictatorships.

The admission of defeat alarmed some leading charities. Justin Forsyth, Oxfam International's chief officer in Washington, said any further decline in official aid would leave many of the world's poorest nations in desperate straits.

"Some countries, like Mozambique, do not have a choice. They will not attract private investment because of their internal troubles. If official aid declines, they will have no way of funding basic needs like education and hospitals."

Andrew Simms, Christian Aid spokesman in London, said: "This is what we have feared all along."

Official development finance has fallen in recent years from $70 billion to $65 billion, while private capital flows have risen rapidly, to more than $105 billion between 1991 and 1994, according to the latest OECD figures.

Mr Forsyth called on the World Bank not to give up the fight to persuade industrial countries to maintain contributions but said it was not surprising that the World Bank was concerned about the future of aid.

He said: "The World Bank has lost credibility with governments because the public does not believe the money is really helping the poorest people. The NGOs [non-governmental organisations] think that the World Bank is more concerned with lending large amounts of money than with it reaching the people it is supposed to.

"The private sector is not convinced that there even needs to be a World Bank. They think there should be more guarantees for their loans rather than more World Bank funding."

Mr Simms said further reliance on the markets would be the final blow for countries in sub-Saharan Africa. "They have suffered because Western countries have realigned funding since the cold war ended. More money is being channelled into eastern and central Europe. If the decline in aid were being matched by productive private capital inflows we wouldn't be so worried, but it isn't."

The ideological shift to the right, which was initiated by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, has put more emphasis on leaving development in the Third World to the free market.

The World Bank's fears for official international aid have been fuelled by resistance among key donor nations to recent funding programmes. While the Republican-dominated US Congress has thrown the aid programme into chaos by holding back on hundreds of millions of dollars which it had pledged in previous years, the Germans have put the brakes on a British-driven plan to sell International Monetary Fund gold reserves to increase debt relief.

In each case, politicians are acutely aware of the public response to approving bigger donations. Germany has refused to sell its gold reserves to fund programmes in the eastern part of the country, and politicians are understood to be reluctant to approve an international sale in case they are forced to do the same at home.

British official aid to the developing world is set to decline by 16 per cent by 1999, according to Christian Aid.

Mexico and Russia leave a big hole in IMF's coffers

THE International Monetary Fund is to ask shareholders for a large increase in its capital base after a sharp deterioration in the Fund's cash position, *writes Alex Brummer.*

Michel Camdessus, the managing director, has indicated that he would like to see the Fund's quotas — the equivalent of its capital base — doubled from the current $210 billion.

The IMF's annual report, released last week, shows that the Fund's liquidity has tumbled to the lowest levels since 1987 because of the pressure put on its resources by the 1995 Mexican crisis and lending to support the Yeltsin administration in Russia.

Moscow was the biggest borrower from the Fund in the last financial year, using up $5.5 billion of Fund quotas or resources. Russia is currently drawing down the biggest credit ($10.8 billion) ever advanced by the Fund.

The report also shows that Mexico continues to draw heavily on resources along with Argentina and Zambia. Much of the IMF's usable resources are being eaten up in lending programmes to the countries of the former Soviet bloc, with Ukraine among those which are prospective big borrowers.

Senior Fund officials conceded that achieving a doubling of resources during what is known as the 11th Quota Review will almost certainly be politically impossible, given the difficulty in getting the US Congress to agree any funding for international organisations.

The World Bank is already being forced to redraw plans for the International Development Association, which makes loans to the poorest countries, because appropriations are still trapped in congressional committees.

Officials believe that although the need for greater resources can be shown, given the sharp rise in IMF members since the last quota increase, a doubling of resources is unlikely to win support of the richest industrial countries. IMF officials are still hoping for an increase of between 50 per cent and 75 per cent, although a formal request is unlikely to be made until the US elections are out of the way in November.

The annual report shows that the Fund's cash declined last year and will continue to fall in the current year, given the demand on its resources and the commitments already made. It is particularly concerned, however, that the capital increase should cope with the needs of more than three dozen new members — many of them ex-communist countries — which have joined up since the last quota increase.

The quota increase will also provide the opportunity for the IMF to adjust national holdings of quotas to take account of shifts in global economic power.

Several large countries, notably China, Russia and India, have joined the upper ranks as their national output has grown — as have some of the East Asian tigers. As part of the quota increase they are expected to strengthen their shareholdings, but not enough to dislodge the IMF big five: the US, Japan, Germany, Britain and France.

A similar broadening in the power base of the world economy is expected to be approved at the annual meetings of the IMF/World Bank later this month when the General Arrangements to Borrow, a credit facility for use by the IMF in emergencies, is expanded to $50 billion, bringing in a series of new countries.

● Uganda is expected to be the first country to benefit from the World Bank/IMF debt reduction scheme if it is approved by finance ministers.

There is still some uncertainty, because of the opposition of countries including Germany, Italy and the Nordic states to gold sales designed to help finance the IMF contribution to the plan. IMF officials have raised the possibility privately that some of the organisation's reserves might be used to close the funding gap.

Under current figures the IMF would cut its claims on Uganda by $75 million by the end of 1999; the World Bank would have to provide a further $155 million of debt forgiveness, and other lenders, including the European Investment Bank, would come in with $18 million worth of reductions.

In Brief

THE head of an international trading empire, the Gulf group, plotted a $1.2 billion fraud that led to the collapse of the BCCI bank and financial disaster for its depositors, London's Old Bailey heard. Abbas Gokal operated the swindle to fund his lavish lifestyle and provide personal gain for both himself and his family, said Anthony Hacking QC, prosecuting in a trial expected to last six months.

GILLETTE, the consumer goods giant, scooped up the alkaline battery maker Duracell in a $7 billion deal.

FRANCESCO CAIO, Olivetti's managing director, has been formally placed under investigation by magistrates on suspicion of publishing false company information. On Monday Olivetti shares fell to 515 lire, less than the price of a cup of coffee.

THE European Commission has launched a monopolies investigation into Cadbury Schweppes' $1.08 billion sale of its UK soft drinks plants to an associate of Coca-Cola.

PRICE Waterhouse, the international accountancy firm, has stepped up the Western invasion of China with plans to invest $100 million in offices and staff recruitment over the next five years.

THE City has warned the UK Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, against further interest rate cuts this year despite an August fall in inflation.

INDEPENDENT Newspapers, the Irish newspaper group run by Tony O'Reilly, moved to extend its global ambitions with its largest takeover bid yet, a US$710 million offer for Wilson & Horton, New Zealand's largest newspaper company.

THE annual rise in top UK company directors' pay has accelerated this year to 12.6 per cent, taking the average total package to $1 million, according to Incomes Data Services.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates September 16	Sterling rates September 9
Australia	1.9740-1.9760	1.9462-1.9486
Austria	16.52-16.54	16.36-16.38
Belgium	48.34-48.32	47.90-47.96
Canada	2.1327-2.1343	2.1404-2.1424
Denmark	9.04-9.05	8.97-8.97
France	8.00-8.01	7.94-7.94
Germany	2.3491-2.3509	2.3259-2.3284
Hong Kong	12.03-12.04	12.05-12.06
Ireland	0.9659-0.9671	0.9631-0.9645
Italy	2.370-2.373	2.351-2.354
Japan	171.73-171.00	170.03-170.32
Netherlands	2.6336-2.6354	2.6072-2.6096
New Zealand	2.2396-2.2420	2.2407-2.2442
Norway	10.06-10.07	0.99-0.99
Portugal	240.00-240.21	238.12-238.41
Spain	198.00-198.13	196.23-196.50
Sweden	10.31-10.33	10.38-10.30
Switzerland	1.9290-1.9313	1.8962-1.8989
USA	1.5585-1.5671	1.5595-1.56040
ECU	1.2400-1.2416	1.2310-1.2323

FTSE100 Share Index up 66.4 at 3977.2. FTSE 250 Index up 37.8 at 4462.0. Gold down $1.75 at $382.75.

The Washington Post

Muslims Afraid to Vote in East Bosnia

John Pomfret in Konjevic Polje

THE LAST TIME Harija Cozic saw the rolling hills of eastern Bosnia was July 11, 1995. After Serb forces rampaged through the town of Srebrenica, Cozic and more than 30,000 Muslim women, children and elderly people were packed into buses and flatbed trucks and expelled to territory held by the Muslim-led Bosnian government.

For the last four miles of the trip, they were forced to walk. A trail of tears snaked through the countryside. Meanwhile, Serb gunmen are believed to have slaughtered up to 8,000 Muslim men caught in and around Srebrenica, allegedly on the orders of their military chief, Gen. Ratko Mladic. One of them was Cozic's brother. Another was her father. Another was her cousin. Another was her uncle.

Last Saturday, Cozic, dressed in her somewhat threadbare Sunday best, returned to a war-ravaged field west of Bratunac, her home town, to vote in Bosnia's nationwide elections. At a polling station in a burned-out, two-story house that used to belong to a Muslim, now dead, Cozic cast her ballot with quiet dignity.

Serb policemen surrounded the site. Cozic and several other Muslims identified some of them as the gunmen who had driven them out of their homes in Bratunac in 1992, forcing them to take refuge in doomed Srebrenica, which is about six miles south. A platoon of U.S. Army military police stood by in case of trouble.

One of the Muslim women picked a bouquet of wildflowers after casting her vote. "I'll dry these and think of home all winter," said Zehra Ferhadbegovic, 49, an electrical engineer, with tears in her eyes. "This was my vote to come home," she said.

Directly across from the polling place, in a verdant valley amid rolling hills, lay a mass grave from which international war crimes investigators exhumed more than 80 bodies earlier this year. They had all been shot in the back of the head. All were believed to have come from Srebrenica.

As many as 8,000 Muslims from around Srebrenica and the neighboring town of Bratunac had been expected to return on Saturday to vote. But as of late Saturday afternoon only two buses, carrying 31 people altogether, had arrived from Muslim-held ground. Indeed, throughout Bosnia, the number of people crossing from the Muslim-Croat federation to the Serb side was far less than expected.

Western election officials had predicted that between 30,000 and *110,900 people would cross the* lines. In all, only 350 to 400 buses, carrying no more than 20,000 people, did so. Those low numbers seemed to cheer Bosnian Serb officials, who had spent the war trying to carve out a separate state.

"That means they'll never come home," said a Serb policeman who identified himself only as Brane but acknowledged that he had forced some of those very voters from their homes.

There are several reasons why so few people joined Cozic in her courageous trip into the Serbs' stronghold. First, in August, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which is supervising Bosnia's elections, postponed a key part of them — voting for municipal offices — because ultranationalist Serbs had engaged in widespread electoral fraud.

Bosnia's municipal elections are particularly important to people ex*pelled from areas where they used* to be in the majority, like the Muslims of eastern Bosnia. In theory, when these elections occur, Muslims will be able to return to such areas and elect their local representatives, in effect overturning at the ballot box the Serbs' military victory. Thus, Western officials hypothesized that Muslims are waiting for the municipal voting — which will probably be held in November — to cross the lines.

But other reasons point to bad organization, which has wracked the OSCE's electoral work over the past nine months.

Serbs, in consultation with the OSCE, picked out two polling stations that were "recommended" for the Muslims around Srebrenica. Serb police declared they would not guarantee Muslim voters security elsewhere.

One station was here in Konjevic Polje, across the street from a mass *grave, in the heart of the Serbs'* killing fields. The other location was even stranger — Zutica, a muddy village whose name, in English, means jaundice.

There the polling station sat in a garage more than 300 feet from the main road. Voters would have to negotiate a slippery, muddy trail that at times ran perilously close to a raging river, swollen with last week's rains. Then they would have to deal with Miro Pejic. Pejic is the chief of the Zutica polling station, approved for his post by the OSCE.

As a practical joke, Pejic and his colleagues, five other Serb men, had placed several pigs in a room next to the polling station. As they waited for Muslims to arrive, the men giggled and cursed as the pigs squealed and oinked. Pork is shunned by followers of Islam.

"I guess all the Turks are dead," Pejic said, employing a Serb slur for Bosnia's Muslim men. "Anyway, I *want some fresh meat. My wife gave* birth 20 days ago, so I'm not allowed sex at home. Maybe a young Muslim girl will give me what I need. After she votes, of course."

His colleagues laughed uproariously.

Pejic turned serious, though, when the talk turned to politics. One of the candidates for the presidency of the Serb half of Bosnia was not a real citizen, so he should not be on the ballot, Pejic declared.

That candidate is Nedzo Dzuric, a Muslim.

Why wasn't he a real citizen?

"Because he's not living here," Pejic said.

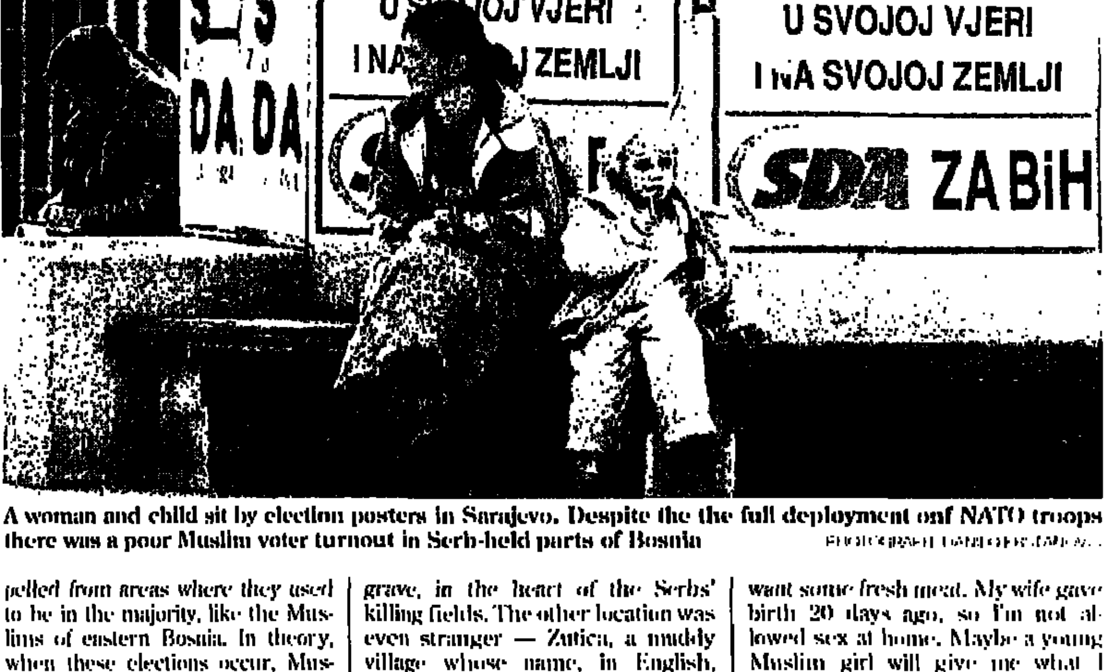
But Dzuric was expelled by Serb gunmen.

"He's still not a citizen," Pejic said.

But why?

"Because he's a Turk," Pejic said.

Only one Muslim voted on Saturday at Pejic's station.



A woman and child sit by election posters in Sarajevo. Despite the the full deployment onf NATO troops there was a poor Muslim voter turnout in Serb-held parts of Bosnia

Fraud Over Chemical Weapons

OPINION
Lally Weymouth

IF THE Clinton administration succeeds in persuading the Senate to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention, the mere fact of a new *treaty will not help the United States* combat the spread of this weapon of mass destruction.

Indeed, this particular treaty may do the reverse: Some of the treaty's opponents argue convincingly that it would actually increase the trade in chemical agents with military application.

Certainly, it would facilitate the establishment of an unnecessary international regulatory agency with unlimited police powers over thousands of U.S. companies that produce chemicals that could be used to make weapons.

Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Arizona, agrees with the majority staff of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations: Of course a verifiable treaty that achieved real reductions in chemical weapons would serve U.S. national-security interests. But, argues Kyl, this treaty isn't verifiable. Nor would it reduce the chemical arsenals in countries U.S. officials deem most likely to use such war tools against America and its allies: Libya, Syria, North Korea and Iraq. Not surprisingly, these rogue states have refused to sign on to the regime.

In fact, not one country of concern to the United States on the chemical-weapons front has ratified this convention: not the People's Republic of China, Iran, Cuba or even Russia, which has signed but not ratified and is said to possess one of the most sophisticated chemical arsenals in the world.

Treaty proponents argue that the convention would enable the United States to gather intelligence on other countries' chemical-weapons programs. But Sen. Kyl calls such benefits "marginal," and says, "It's not worth the price."

If the treaty is ratified, moreover, the United States will have to pick up a considerable part of the setup costs of a massive new international regulatory body in the Hague. This superagency would be empowered to subject U.S. businesses to routine or "challenge" inspections of sites that allegedly might contain chemical weaponry or its key ingredients.

The inspection teams that will enter U.S. plants if this convention is ratified could have representatives from states such as France and Japan, for example, that practice industrial espionage. Ironically, Washington also will have to foot some of the bills for these inspections, which experts believe may violate the constitutional rights of U.S. companies and citizens. American companies also would have to provide continuing, time-consuming reports.

Negotiations on the treaty began under President Reagan; the accord was seen then as a verifiable, global ban on chemical weapons. As time passed, the purposes changed. Arms-control experts concluded that constitutional rights clashed with the need to verify. There would have to be a compromise. The balance that was struck, according to Kyl, adversely affects the United States: While the convention doesn't catch and punish many countries *that have secret chemical-weapons* programs, it ends up imposing heavy costs and constitutional burdens on the United States.

Dole's Treaty Turnabout

EDITORIAL

FOR THE better part of a decade then-Senator Robert Dole was a part of the legion of Republicans, including President Ronald Reagan and President George Bush, James Baker and Brent Scowcroft, who supported writing a treaty to outlaw poison gas.

Last week, on the eve of a Senate vote on ratification, Dole indicated that he had changed his mind.

It is hard to believe the political campaign had nothing to do with the candidate's flip-flop, although Dole does cite reasons. He suggests he had reservations about the treaty's coverage — the rogue states that are its prime target will surely reject it — and about its enforceability, which under the best of circumstances will not be foolproof.

Others who are not running *for office have also cited these* views, but we think there are strong arguments against them. The treaty does not immediately reach the rogues, but it does create a legal and political framework in which they can be better isolated and pursued.

Dole cites the situation of American chemical companies, which, he believes, would suffer under unacceptably intrusive inspection obligations.

But the companies themselves have greeted the treaty as a welcome and bearable liberation of their exports from the onus of contributing to rogue chemical stocks.

The treaty has been pulled, not killed. In other political circumstances, it can be sent back to the Senate. But meanwhile the ratifications of other states will bring it into effect. As a result, the American government will be frozen out of the treaty's initial application — this can only warm the poison-gas crowd — and the American chemical industry will risk a cut-off of tens of billions of dollars in *exports*.

We don't believe that's in the United States' national interest, or Dole's, for that matter.

Afghan Leaders Still Face Tough Foe

Kenneth J. Cooper in Kabul

A NEW Afghan coalition government has risen above being just another warring faction and has made peace with several foes, but faces an increasing challenge from its last remaining foe — an Islamic militia that holds two-thirds of the country.

Since factions of Islamic warriors called mujaheddin drove Soviet occupation troops from Afghanistan in 1989 and toppled a communist Afghan government three years later, four years of civil war have seen many military reversals, broken alliances and defections among Afghanistan's factions, which tend to be ethnically based and supported by other nations in the region.

Since May, however, the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani has persuaded three major factions to accept peace terms that have brought key militia leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar back to the prime minister's office and re-opened a strategic highway to Central Asia.

Despite continued friction over accusations that Pakistan has aided the Afghan government's adversaries, officials here say they have improved relations with its eastern neighbor, which has promised to re-open an embassy in Kabul after a year's absence.

Yet even as Rabbani's government has consolidated its position here in the besieged capital, militia forces of an Islamic group known as the Taliban have swept through three southeastern provinces in the past week and now control roughly two-thirds of Afghanistan.

The militia has been attacking the capital from the south and west with rockets since October, and opening a third front on the east could stretch government forces and threaten the only airport currently serving Kabul.

The Taliban has responded to the government steps toward peace by raining rockets on Kabul, as it did when Hekmatyar rejoined the government, when the link to Central Asia was reopened and when a new U.N. mediator, Norbert Holl of Germany, arrived in the city.

The high cost of food, fuel and other essential items has made many of the capital's residents eager for any leader who can bring peace, whether from the current government, the Taliban or deposed king Mohammad Zahir Shah.

"Whoever can bring peace here and whoever can bring food for the people, we will accept," said Ghulam Mohiudin, 65, who runs a sidewalk bicycle-repair shop in a section of south Kabul that lies in ruins.

The Taliban emerged as a fighting force suddenly in 1994 and draws its name from students of Islamic religious schools in bordering provinces of Pakistan.

The militia controls 17 of 33 provinces, compared with the seven in government hands and in Taliban-controlled areas has established a strict Islamic regime that does not allow girls to attend schools or women to work outside the home except in the health professions.

The Afghan government has accused Pakistan of backing the Taliban, which Pakistan denies. State Department officials have asserted privately that Pakistan at least has provided the militia with valuable fuel for tanks and aircraft.

Pakistan and Afghanistan's other neighbors — Iran, Uzbekistan, India and Russia — have chosen favorites in the fighting because of their interest in opening trade routes through the landlocked nation and installing a friendly government in a traditional buffer state between South and Central Asia.

The State Department has shown renewed interest in the conflict because of Afghanistan's role as a major exporter of international terrorists and heroin.

Despite the Taliban's dominant position, the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency has concluded that none of Afghanistan's factions is strong enough to subdue all the others and has predicted a stalemate unless there is a negotiated settlement.

The Taliban has rejected government offers to negotiate, saying the Rabbani regime, which took power in 1992, is illegitimate because he was supposed to have resigned last year under a U.N. accord. Rabbani is part of a ruling triumvirate with Hekmatyar and top military commander Ahmed Shah Massoud.

Hekmatyar was prime minister in Rabbani's government from March 1993 to January 1994. Before and after that period, Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami (Islamic Party) forces were responsible for destroying much of south Kabul with barrages of rockets. He returned to the government in June, his forces militarily weakened by defections to the Taliban.

"He came to the conclusion that for the salvation of our country he was left with no other option than to have an agreement with these people in Kabul," said Hamed Ibrahimi, Hekmatyar's spokesman.

Both Rabbani and Massoud, who belong to the Tajik ethnic group, were trying to broaden their political base by recruiting Hekmatyar, who, like those in the Taliban, is a member of the dominant Pashtun group.

As prime minister, Hekmatyar has moved to undercut the Taliban's political base by pronouncing similarly strict Islamic laws, except for the educational and work restrictions on females. He has closed Kabul's movie theaters, banned music on state broadcasts, ordered women to dress modestly and moved to oust communists from government military and intelligence agencies.

"The Taliban was telling their people [that] an un-Islamic setup was ruling in Kabul," Ibrahimi said. "[Hekmatyar] deprived the Taliban of their slogans and motives."

But after his many shifts of allegiance, Hekmatyar is not as popular as he once was on the streets of Kabul. "We thought when Hekmatyar joined the government, the prices of everything would go down . . . [But] the prices went up," complained Mohammad Yaqub, 25, who sells grapes from a handcart.

Besides Hekmatyar's faction, others groups that have made peace with the government are a Shiite Muslim faction in central Afghanistan and an ethnic Uzbek faction led by Abdurrashid Dostum. They have ceased hostilities but have not joined the government formally.

U.S. Agents Guard Haiti President

Thomas W. Lippman

THE CLINTON administration sent two dozen diplomatic security agents to Haiti last week to help protect President René Préval, whose own guard force is about to be purged of agents suspected of participating in political murders, senior administration officials said.

The expected housecleaning of the presidential security force in Haiti vindicates conservative Republicans in Congress, who have been complaining for more than a year that U.S. aid funds were being channeled to Haitian groups suspected of involvement in political assassinations. GOP legislators have tried doggedly to devalue one of President Clinton's proudest achievements, the restoration of democratic rule in Haiti, by citing corruption and violence in the government there.

Administration officials said there is a more positive side to Préval's decision to purge his security force. "It's part of a pattern in which we see Préval trying to strengthen Haitian institutions," a State Department official said.

They also acknowledged, however, that nearly two years after Clinton sent U.S. troops to oust Haiti's military rulers and restore democratic government, Haiti remains a violence-prone, corrupt nation whose institutions of government are fragile at best, despite the expenditure of tens of millions of dollars in U.S. aid.

Republicans in Congress denounced administration plans to use $3 million in U.S. defense funds to pay for the new security agents.

Clinton "is telling us he wants to send $3 million in new U.S. foreign aid to Haiti, so that he can protect Préval from his existing security force, a bunch of thugs and assassins, who were trained, equipped and funded with previous U.S. foreign aid," Marc Thiessen, spokesman for Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jesse Helms, R-North Carolina, said.

Préval, who took office in February, became convinced by August that the presidential security force he inherited from his predecessor, populist Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was tainted and some members would have to be removed, according to the officials. Préval asked for U.S. help to protect him while new agents to replace those expelled from the guard force are trained and those retained are re-trained.

The U.S. security force consists of agents from the State Department's diplomatic security unit and private contractors hired by the State Department but paid by the Haitian government, the U.S. officials said. The force will join 15 U.S. agents already in Port-au-Prince in screening Presidential Guard members to decide which ones are "clean" enough to retain.

Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott told a House committee in June that "by March of this year, [Préval] had emoved all the individuals we had then reason to believe were implicated in these [political] murders."

On August 20, however, two right-wing politicians were gunned down in a drive-by shooting. According to sources here familiar with the case, members of Préval's security unit are suspected of the crime.

In Depth Study Finds the Nation's Teachers Lacking

Rene Sanchez

ONE OF the most comprehensive studies ever undertaken of the nation's teachers has concluded that an alarming number of them are hired each year without proper credentials, rarely get help from schools to improve their skills, and often leave the profession after only a few years in the classroom.

The study, released last week by a bipartisan commission of prominent public officials and educators, presents a blunt, broad indictment of how states and school districts train and treat teachers, calling the situation "a national shame."

Commission members said that during two years of research they found that about one-fourth of high school teachers lack college training in their primary classroom subject; that nearly 40 percent of math teachers are not fully qualified for their assignment; that 500 of the 1,200 education schools lack accreditation; and that three of every 10 teachers quit the job within five years. The commission called teacher recruiting and hiring practices nationwide "distressingly ad hoc."

"Although no state will permit a person to write wills, practice medicine, fix plumbing, or style hair without completing training and passing an examination, more than 40 states allow districts to hire teachers who have not met these basic requirements," the commission's report states. "Most states pay more attention to the qualifications of veterinarians treating America's cats and dogs than those of the people educating the nation's children and youth."

In response to the study, President Clinton directed Education Secretary Richard Riley to take several steps to assist states as they try to improve hiring and training standards for teachers.

During a campaign stop in Fresno, California, where he announced new federal spending for independent "charter" public schools, the president said, "The report makes it clear that we should have high standards for teachers, but that often teachers are not rewarded when they do a good job . . . A lot of times these reports are ignored, but this is a good one."

The study was careful not to blame teachers or their unions for the problems it outlined. Instead, it faulted states and school districts for not putting more emphasis on teacher quality.

The issue is particularly critical now. Demand for teachers is reaching unprecedented levels because of record enrollment around the nation and the graying of the current corp of teachers. Educators expect to have to hire more than two million teachers in the next 10 years.

"Nothing is more crucial to the quality of education than the quality of the classroom teacher," said Illinois Gov. Jim Edgar, R, a commission member.

But toughening teacher standards is proving to be difficult for many states, in part because there is often no consensus about how to do it. In some states, governors and lawmakers are battling with the National Education Association, the nation's largest teacher union, over an array of teacher certification, training and tenure policies.

Republican presidential nominee Bob Dole has made the NEA a central issue in his campaign, denouncing the union as a powerful obstacle to reforms that would enhance the quality of teachers. Last week, Dole again accused Clinton of being too beholden to teacher unions to lead an effective fight for improving education. "It seems to me that we've got to give the schools back to the teachers and the parents, and take them away from the union leaders who sit in Washington, D.C., and call themselves the National Education Association," Dole said.

But the commission questions that view. Its study calls the notion that teacher unions are adamantly against reforms a "myth," and states that many union chapters nationally are trying to upgrade teacher professionalism. Keith Geiger, who until this summer had been the NEA's president, was a member of the commission.

Other members include several university presidents, governors, teachers, and chief executive officers of national companies.



Duke of Debt Takes All The Credit

OPINION
Ellen Goodman

AND YOU thought we had maxed out on shamelessness. That sometime during the early 1990s, someone on a tabloid TV show about a kinky, cross-dressing affair with a best friend's Rottweiler had crossed the last frontier.

Well, me too. In fact, by the time the story of the sex worker and the spinmeister came along, there was more public entertainment than private embarrassment.

On "Hard Copy," which paid Sherry Rowlands somewhat more than her usual hourly wage, the hooker held the high ground. In Time magazine, Dick Morris and his wife Eileen McGann posed for a portrait suggesting that Sherry was barely a blip in their marital bliss.

But just a few cable channels away from "Hard Copy," there was a new blow being struck for shamelessness. This time the once-forbidden topic for television wasn't sex. It was money. The former sin wasn't infidelity. It was debt.

The hip new quiz show on Lifetime is named after our latest national fad: "Debt." On the night that Sherry did the Dick story, a cheery young woman named Melanie was telling the world why she was in the red for $7,223. Because, she chirped, "the world has too many nice shoes."

In this quiz show, the debtors may be down at the heels, but they are relentlessly upbeat. The host is alternately described as "The Crown Prince of Credit" and "The Duke of Debt." The questions are cultural trivia for the Generation Insolvent.

This is a contest in which "three debt-laden Americans just like you compete to have us pay off all their bills and go home with NOTHING."

Now, I have no doubt that "Debt" is television for our times. As the producer Andrew Golder says, the old quiz shows were losing their point. The prizes became passé.

"Once it was a new thing to get a washer or dryer. Now people already have the prizes. They bought them on credit cards," says Golder. "What they need is help paying off the credit cards."

Golder recognizes the show would never have worked in the days when "debt was a fate worse than death." They wouldn't have had hundreds of contestants eager to tell their story in red ink.

But now we have Rob who got $8,800 in debt by following the Grateful Dead and Jill whose four cats and dogs devoured $7,700 more than she earned. The "all" they happily tell is how they got into the financial hole.

Americans now owe $1.2 trillion in consumer debt — not counting mortgages. That's growing at 9 percent a year. And $350 billion of it is on credit cards. In an era when these credit cards come uninvited in the mail and when "consumer confidence" is measured by the willingness to use them, it's all too easy to get in too deep.

If a handful of people will get out of debt by getting on "Debt," 1.1 million this year will get out by filing for bankruptcy. But the truth is that there's also lot less stigma in having a Chapter 11 in your autobiography. Once you went to debtor's prison. Now you go to debtor's TV.

Canada Acts on Blood Supply

Howard Schneider in Toronto

CANADIAN health officials have decided to strip the Red Cross of authority over the nation's blood supply, seeking to rebuild confidence shaken by the infection of thousands of transfusion recipients a decade ago.

The decision marks a turning point in Canada's long, convoluted debate over how to respond to the blood scandal, and what to do about lagging trust in the Red Cross. Revered internationally for its relief and rescue operations, the charitable group has taken a beating in Canada for the blood crisis and more recently for its resistance to public discussion of who was responsible.

An estimated 1,200 Canadians were infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, and another 12,000 with hepatitis C through blood transfusions in the 1980s. Hundreds are expected to die from those infections. Advocacy groups contend the Red Cross and the Canadian government ignored evidence of the problem and refused to promptly implement proper blood-screening methods, in some cases waiting months longer to establish protections than the United States and other industrialized nations. During that time, the infections continued.

Concluding a three-day meeting here, Canada's provincial health ministers announced last week the creation of a new agency to oversee the collection, testing, treatment and distribution of blood donations. Even though a public inquiry into the tainted blood scandal of the 1980s is continuing, the health officials decided that the best way to rebuild public confidence is to remove the Red Cross from management of the system.

The charitable agency may still be involved in collecting blood or other aspects of its supply to hospitals and clinics. But even that staple function of the agency is now in doubt and would be allowed only under the supervision of a new, independent authority that will establish standards, police them and include representatives of hemophiliac, HIV-positive or other groups among its members.

"Recent polling data, recent reviews from [blood] consumers, have expressed some real concerns," said federal Health Minister David Dingwall.

"Our blood system in September of 1996 is safe," Dingwall said, but "the governance issue has to be addressed . . . Our action will help restore confidence."

A spokesman for the Canadian Red Cross said the agency would not respond to the decision until it is studied further. The health ministers said they hope the new blood agency will be operating within a year.

On a Whiff And a Prayer

Kevin Sullivan and Mary Jordan

THE CULT AT THE END OF THE WORLD
By David E. Kaplan and Andrew Marshall
Crown. 310pp. $25

HOLY TERROR: Armageddon in Tokyo
By D.W. Brackett
Weatherhill. 196pp. $24.95

ON MARCH 20, 1995, a poison gas invented by the Nazis during World War II was released in the Tokyo subways, killing 12 people and injuring 5,500 more. The attack shattered Japan's nearly universal sense of security. In a nation where women feel free to walk the darkest alleys in the middle of the night, people have started looking over their shoulders.

Within hours of the attack, police suspicions focused on an obscure religious cult called Aum Supreme Truth and its bearded, nearly blind guru, Shoko Asahara, who were eventually charged in Japan's first case of domestic mass terrorism. The case sent Japan's media into triple overdrive. No detail was too small to report. Papers competed for scoops, pouring often dubious information at readers who tried to catch facts like someone standing beneath a waterfall with a spoon.

Since the attack, the case has become a muddled mess for most casual observers. Did Asahara confess? Did Aum buy nuclear weapons in Russia? Did they try to spray gas on Tokyo from a helicopter? Who knows?

So thank goodness for two new books that attempt to put Aum and all its evil, bizarre history into a single narrative. The Cult At The End Of The World by David E. Kaplan and Andrew Marshall and Holy Terror: Armageddon In Tokyo by D.W. Brackett are both accessible primers on one of the scariest and strangest bands of terrorists in recent history.

Tokyo-based journalists Kaplan and Marshall trace Aum from its origins as the brainchild of Chizuo Matsumoto, a small-time herbal medicine huckster who later changed his name to Asahara and declared himself to be Jesus Christ. They follow the cult from Japan to Russia to the Australian outback in a compelling way that manages to make sense and cut through the fog.



Calling for the apocalypse . . . A poster of Aum cult founder Shoko Asahara looms over his eldest daughter PHOTO: TSUGUFUMI MATSUMOTO

Both books rightly take to task U.S. intelligence officials who failed to spot Aum's potential danger. But Brackett seems almost to suggest that the United States is responsible for Aum's crimes. He finds American culpability in Japan's constitution, written by U.S. occupiers after World War II, which calls for American-style separation of church and state. He argues that the American authors should have known that the rule-happy Japanese would carry this to dangerous extremes. His hindsight seems a bit too clear to be fair; the majestically inept performance of the Japanese police was surely rooted in Japan's postwar skittishness about government control of religion.

The underlying message of both books is that a new kind of terrorism is upon us. The Irish Republican Army and Hezbollah are still blowing up their political targets. But a new breed of ideologically vacant Armageddon peddlers are sprouting up, with visions of mass biological, chemical or nuclear attacks dancing in their addled heads. With the former Soviet Union's massive arsenal under dubious control, and with Internet access to all sorts of chemical and biological recipes, it is all to easy to see another Asahara, another doomsday cult, coming soon to a subway near you.

Murder in Sarajevo

Anthony Olcott

THE MONKEY HOUSE
By John Fullerton
Crown. 288pp. $23

JOHN FULLERTON'S marketers have good reason to stand The Monkey House alongside the works of John le Carré and Frederick Forsyth. This first novel offers the authenticity, drive and exoticism of any of those earlier thrillers.

However, it takes one step beyond them by asking what, for the genre, is a new and timely question.

The crimes (social or political) with which "whodunits" try to horrify us require that we live in an otherwise ordered world. Our frisson as readers comes from contemplation of the anarchy which crime might introduce into that order, while our satisfaction comes when the criminal is found, his motives are reviled, and order is reasserted.

Fullerton, however, writes of Sarajevo, where, as Superintendent Rosso, the novel's hero, puts it, "a combination of war, hunger, and poverty (had reduced) a people, (carried) them back from the 20th century . . . to Neanderthal man . . . ready to bash his neighbour's brains for a plate of beans." In a city that has the evil misfortune to lie at the juncture of three great warrior religions — Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Islam — justice is all but impossible to define, since it is scarcely clear even what constitutes crime.

Zjelko Bukovac has been battered, then drowned in her bathtub, in the apartment complex called the Monkey House. Rosso finds clues, interrogates witnesses and even brings a suspect to jail, but the novel's central issue is not "whodunit." What Fullerton is wrestling with is the more fearful question: Why does it even matter who killed this heroin addict and probable traitor, this woman who was "only a Serb"? After all, in Sarajevo "Serbs were fighting Moslems and Croats, Croats fought Serbs and Moslems, Moslems fought Serbs and Croats and one another," while "regular Croatian troops [fought] alongside Bosnia's Croats against the Moslem-dominated Bosnian army with which they were formally allied against the Serbs," to say nothing of the "Croats, Moslems, and Serbs who were loyal to no one but themselves." Even Rosso reflects this complexity; he is the son of an Englishwoman and a Croat Nazi.

In an environment this tangled, even nominal justice looks corrupt; in order to lock away the murderer, Rosso turns his goddaughter into a decoy, manipulates a reporter into becoming a hostage and strikes a bargain of convenience with an ineffectual and factionalized Bosnian government, which has ceded control to a gangster who finances his defense of the city against the Serbs by selling other Serbs raw heroin, which they sell elsewhere to finance their war. The UN soldiers, who are meant to keep the peace, instead black-market their weapons to both sides in order to buy girls and booze, while their principled officers are intent only on maintaining the bloody stalemate between Serbs who have guns but no men and Bosnians who have men but no guns. International opinion is represented by Branston Flett, a reporter who is well-fed in a starving city; for him, the sole importance of Sarajevo's death is whether his stories about it will be placed "above the fold."

IT IS only at the end of The Monkey House that Rosso — and Fullerton — succeed in suggesting how justice might one day return to Sarajevo, even if Rosso cannot yet achieve it. Burdened to breaking by the moral oxymorons of civil war, Rosso permits himself to trade his own life for that of another. A tiny gesture against the scale of civil war, probably futile and certainly tragic, Rosso's final act nevertheless reminds us that real justice will flourish only when humans find the strength to do as he does at the novel's end, rising for a moment above what Solzhenitsyn has called the need to "eat first and die last."

Fullerton's predecessors in his chosen genre had the luxury of a world in which it was sufficient to ask "whodunit." His portrayal of Sarajevo is a brutal reminder that, in the world which is upon us, in order to reach justice we may first have to answer the question "Who cares?" The real pleasure, however, is Fullerton's elegant demonstration that justice is ultimately a product not of laws, courts or police, but rather of human spirit.

Golden Days in The City of Lights

Heywood Hale Broun

I'LL ALWAYS HAVE PARIS: A Memoir
By Art Buchwald
Putnam. 236pp. $24.95

TO A young man for whom service in the U.S. Marines was a wonderful change from difficult early years, Paris right after World War II must have seemed very much like heaven to Art Buchwald. In the larger part of this book, which covers the years in which rapidly and improbably he rose from GI-Bill student to featured columnist on the Paris Herald Tribune, the pages almost visibly bubble. It was the Vie de Boheme, a long way from burned manuscripts and pawned overcoats.

Buchwald may have been abandoned by his father, but in Paris he hobnobbed with celebrities: Elvis Presley, Lucille Ball, Truman Capote, and, if they'll forgive me for the second tier billing, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor.

Unabashedly he admits, "I really loved mingling with the very rich."

Fresh from the ghastly drinks the Marines had made in patched-up stills, he became a member of the Confrerie des Chevaliers de Tastevin, a burgundy boosting group. If he was a fraud, he gave good value in good fellowship.

Honest with his readers, Buchwald tells of arriving at a job at the legendary Paris Trib with qualifications that wouldn't have earned him a tryout with a dental supply trade paper. Buchwald reports that his early editor on the Trib, Eric Hawkins, said later, "He wasn't exactly a whirlwind in the beginning. In fact his copy was impossible. He was a complete novice at writing."

A less determined, less lucky man might soon have given up, but the very outsiderness that had dogged his dreadful boyhood served him well. "Gradually," said Hawkins, "he developed an identification with almost every American tourist in Paris. He was constantly fighting waiters or being baffled by wine lists. He became the typical bumbling American in Paris."

That dreadful boyhood was described in Buchwald's first autobiographical volume, Leaving Home. Losing his mother to a mental institution, sent by his father to an orphan asylum (the father kept Art's three sisters), sent by the asylum to a series of foster homes, he escaped at last into the tightly gripping arms of the U.S. Marines.

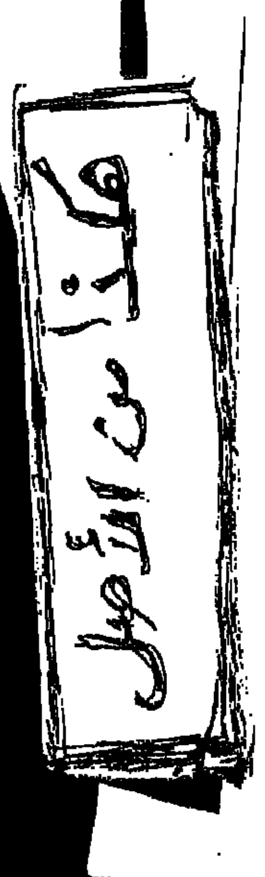
But Art Buchwald, funniest of men, twice suffered a descent into depression some 20 years after his Paris days. Persons suffering mid-life crisis are often told by their therapists that they are suffering from "mild depression." When they complain indignantly that "mild" is hardly the word, they are told that depression is extended despair. Buchwald's experience was closer to despair, but when he touches on his psychiatric confinements they are just black dots on a pair of rose-colored spectacles.

The baby sea turtle emerges from the egg soft-shelled and vulnerable, and scuttles down the beach to the safety of the waves while clouds of birds snap up the turtles beside him. The surviving turtles grow hard shells and swell to majestic proportions, threatened only by men. The soft-shelled Buchwald, against considerable odds, swam through the war and to Paris, where he acquired a formidable carapace against a past that turtles leave behind and men don't.

As early as his show-and-tell days in New York's P.S. 35, Buchwald learned to please — a desperate necessity for one who seemed to be cosmically unpleasing to those who had the care of him. There is a concept called Gestalt which argues that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. When the parts are uncertainty, rejection and pain, it is remarkable that the whole should be a breezy, cheerful defiance of the dismal — a defiance whose falterings, though deep, were brief. Buchwald admits, as do other humorists, that anger is behind much of his laughter, but his rage creates our fun, and he has been at his keyboard a remarkably long time.

It is said that funnymen's acids eventually erode the creative process, but the Buchwald who artfully bumbled his way through Paris in the 1940s is now artfully exposing the bumblings of Washington in the '90s without apparent loss of zest. It is the strongest virtue of the book that Buchwald does not employ the feathered quill of the "those-were-the-days" school but writes as if he were once again at a café in Montparnasse, hoping to catch the eye of a celebrity.

In the course of time he caught the eyes of enough celebrities to make him forget — most of the time — the rigors of P.S. 35 and the Hebrew Orphan Asylum.



Emotions run high in islands dispute

Francis Deron in Beijing and Philippe Pons in Tokyo

TENSION between China and Japan has been mounting since July 14, when ultranationalists belonging to the Japan Youth League built a small lighthouse and put up a Japanese flag on one of the Diaoyu Islands (Senkaku in Japanese). China claims sovereignty over the islands, which are located between the Okinawa archipelago and Taiwan.

On September 5, the Chinese foreign ministry referred to the indignation felt by "all Chinese, including our compatriots in Hong Kong and Taiwan". Two days later, protesters from Hong Kong and Taiwan were prevented from landing on the islands by Japanese coastal defence personnel.

The protesters' demand that protection be provided for their fishing boats, which have been banned from the area by the Japanese, does not have China's explicit support. But Beijing views the dispute as a perfect opportunity to play on nationalist feelings. On September 8, a delegation of 20 people from various Chinese cities handed in a petition to the Beijing authorities demanding military action in the archipelago.

Chinese anger has been fuelled by the fact that last July Japan ratified the UN convention on the law of the sea, which establishes a 200-mile exclusive economic zone within which each country is entitled to fish and exploit mineral resources.

With negotiations between Japan and its Chinese and Taiwanese neighbours over the demarcation of those zones now at a delicate stage, the ultranationalists' act of bravado has embarrassed Tokyo. The Japanese foreign ministry has said: "We neither approve nor disapprove of the initiative. But Japanese sovereignty over the islands is a fact."

Tokyo's version goes as follows: the string of "unclaimed" islands, which first appeared on western maps in the 19th century under their English name, the Pinnacle Islands, but which had already been described in 1787 by the French navigator Jean-François La Pérouse as "rocks covered with flocks of birds", became part of Okinawa district in 1895.

The 1951 San Francisco Treaty, under which Japan formally gave up territories it had occupied, in particular Taiwan (which had been ceded to Japan by imperial China in 1895), makes no mention of Diaoyu. China and Taiwan began to claim sovereignty over the islands only in 1969, when a UN report talked of the probable existence in the area of one of the world's biggest oilfields.

When China saw that its initially restrained protest at the Japan Youth League's action had gone unnoticed, Beijing claimed that the Japanese government had long had designs on the archipelago, was secretly behind the Youth League's action and was breaking the agreement by the two countries, when they normalised diplomatic relations in 1972, not to raise the issue of sovereignty over Diaoyu.





Trouble erupts outside the Japanese Interchange Association in Taipei over Tokyo's claim to the Diaoyu Islands PHOTO: SIMOUKWA ...

This is not the first time Japanese nationalists have laid claim to Diaoyu. In 1978 Issuikai, a movement founded by followers of the writer Yukio Mishima (who committed ritual suicide in 1970), sparked a crisis with Beijing by erecting a lighthouse there.

The Japan Youth League is a much less ideologically orientated association than Issuikai. Its members apparently do little more than rush through the streets chanting nationalist slogans. The movement in fact serves as a front for organised crime. Police sources say that it is controlled by Sumiyoshikai, one of the two main crime syndicates in the Tokyo region.

(September 10)



Autumn test of unity for Italians

Salvatore Aloise in Rome

ITALY seems set for an autumn of discontent. The economic crisis has proved worse than expected: growth will probably not top 1 per cent, while investment remains sluggish and consumption is stagnating.

It is hardly the right moment to ask the Italians to make further sacrifices. Yet that is what Romano Prodi's coalition government will have to do as it faces its first real test — the preparation of the 1997 budget, which aims to put Italy in a position to join a single European currency.

The issue of monetary union is back in the news now that the deputy prime minister, Walter Veltroni, and the chairman of Fiat, Cesare Romiti, have publicly asked whether the top priority — jobs — should be sacrificed on the altar of a single currency.

Fausto Bertinotti, head of the Refounded Communists (RC), whose votes are vital to the survival of Prodi's centre-left government, recently estimated that the government had a "50 per cent chance of getting over the hurdle of the budget".

Prodi has said that the only thing which interests him is economic recovery, and that the government will not engage in any "bargaining on future decisions". He has pledged to come up with the combination of cuts and new revenues that will make possible the budget saving of 32.5 trillion lire ($2.1 billion) which is widely regarded as necessary.

But Prodi also has to take into account the Olive Tree coalition's election promises, the first of which was that it would not tamper with welfare. He has to send out a "strong" political signal that Italy's first left-of-centre government for 50 years is bringing about real changes.

Ministers are being asked to rationalise spending and reduce waste in their departments, according to a method described by the finance minister, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, as "Cartesian". "Painless" cuts of 21 trillion lire are rumoured to be on the cards, but no new taxes will be introduced.

That is not enough, according to the RC, which wants greater consultation on the budget and more energetic measures on the unemployment front. But Prodi already has one success under his belt — an agreement between employers and trade unions that will make the labour market more flexible and attractive to investment.

The other reason for the current political tension has been Umberto Bossi. Quite apart from the sheer provocation of the three-day march organised by his Northern League, which was due to culminate in Venice on September 15 with the proclamation of the independence of "Padania", he has been asking some very blunt questions about how the workings of the Italian administration are to be improved. This time round, the government will not be able to get away with mere promises.

(September 11)

Chechens eager to submit to Islamic law

Sophie Shihab in Grozny

THE Chechen separatist leaders' much publicised plan to adopt an Islamic penal code squares perfectly with an often overlooked characteristic of Chechenia's history: the doctrines of Sufism (a mystical Islamic order) have always informed attitudes and social relationships in this part of the Caucasus. They have underpinned the continuous struggle the Chechens have waged for two centuries against Russian, then Soviet, domination.

On September 6, the fifth anniversary of Chechen independence (proclaimed after the collapse of the Soviet Union), Chechen television broadcast the public flogging of the republic's first Mufti, who was appointed in 1991 by the late Chechen leader, Dzhokhar Dudayev. Shortly after the beginning of the war in Chechenia, the Mufti fled to Moscow and called on his compatriots to submit to the Russians.

The young military commander of Grozny explained that this act of "supreme treason" by a man who should have given moral guidance to a country at war deserved the death penalty, but that since the authorities had chosen independence day to announce an amnesty for all Chechens who had fought on the Russian side the Mufti would get 80 strokes of the cane instead.

The holy man lay on a table and took his punishment, which was far from brutal, in front of television cameras. Once his ordeal was over, he got to his feet, adjusted his dress and explained that he had always "remained with his people in spirit" and intended to continue to do so.

In a village not far from Grozny, a family watched the event on television. The eldest son, who had been to university in Moscow, criticised the separatist leaders, whom he otherwise supported, for tolerating a "return to the Middle Ages". But his sisters pointed out that most villagers, even before the war, had wanted Islamic law to be introduced.

For Chechens, it is simply an official recognition of customs they have always respected, even under the communist regime and during their deportation to Central Asia at the end of the second world war.

Alongside the Soviet judicial system, which was perceived as being fundamentally unfair to the Chechens, an unofficial *cadi* (civil judge) laid down the law in each village on the basis of *sharia* (religious law), *adat* (customary law) and *tariqa* (Sufi doctrine).

The *cadi*, unlike their Soviet counterparts, were unanimously respected, and it was only natural for Chechen fighters to turn to them for help in 1995 after six months of war. At that time the Chechens' experience of Russian "justice" boiled down to being bombed, flung into hell camps, or summarily executed by federal forces.

But it is the system of Sufi brotherhoods, to which everyone belongs, implicitly at least, through the influence of families and clans, that cements Chechen society. The brotherhoods, which went underground during the resistance against communism, began to re-emerge from 1991 on.

Zikr sessions, where members of a brotherhood rhythmically chant the name of Allah and his qualities, have become a regular feature of any television report from Chechenia. But some brotherhoods see this form of publicity as an unattractive development, and were particularly irritated that women took to the streets chanting praises of Allah during demonstrations to demand a Russian pullout.

"It all started here," says an inhabitant of the village of Avturi. "A group of women went round all the other villages by bus with the aim of setting up a women's Islamic movement. They were allowed to do that because it answered a need at the time — the menfolk no longer dared to demonstrate in Grozny after the army had begun firing at them again last winter."

As has already happened in other Muslim countries, the Chechens' latest war of independence has helped the emancipation of women, even if they end up having to conform to Islamist rules on dress and having to tolerate the attitudes that go hand in hand with those rules.

However, to judge from the number of women who joined in the mourning and celebrations of independence day, they seem in no mood to give up the degree of emancipation they already enjoy — within a strict code of public conduct — which is characteristic of the Caucasus mountains region

Amina, whose smiling face and green eyes are all that is visible beneath her Islamic dress, sang so powerfully that she attracted some 50 women to join her in a *zikr* in a cemetery. But when a group of young fighters arrived the singing turning into an animated and exuberant discussion. Was she in favour of *sharia* being introduced? "Of course, better late than never," she exclaimed.

BUT ZARIMA was of a different opinion. She felt depressed when she got home after the independence celebrations because she had heard her hero, the military leader Shamil Basayev, say: "An slamic republic is my life."

Zarima knows Bassayev well because she often helped him in her capacity as a telecommunications expert. But she had no inkling of his new-found Islamic beliefs. A colleague, who had also been active in the separatist struggle, tried to console her: "They'll never manage to put the Chechens in an Islamic straitjacket — we're too rebellious for that."

He was, perhaps, being overoptimistic, like those who believe that the war is well and truly over. But, for now at least, their view does seem to be shared by most Chechens.

(September 10)

Bellyful of tripe

Pascal Mérigeau reviews Lelouch's latest film with its controversial top billing while, below, **Jean-Michel Frodon** reflects on its success

THANKS to a perfectly orchestrated publicity campaign, we all know that there are many similarities between Bernard Tapie and Benoit Blanc, the lawyer turned businessman he plays in Claude Lelouch's latest film, Hommes, Femmes: Mode d'Emploi (Men, Women: User's Manual).

So we are naturally keen to see how he performs. He is first shown talking about himself to a woman who is clearly on the point of lowering her defences. Blanc/Tapie seduces women the same way he runs his business — in overdrive.

Famous for his virtuoso camerawork (he is his own cameraman), Lelouch accordingly ducks and swoops around his characters. Most of them have not yet met each other, but they are bound, one feels, to make each other's acquaintance before long.

Here is pretty Lola (played by Salomé, Lelouch's daughter), barely 13 and already determined to stop at nothing to find the young footballer she met in a train corridor on their way back from winter sports. It takes some time for them to get together again — two hours to be precise, or the length of the movie, which revolves around their story.

Here too, from time to time, is a black-clad "widow" (Anouk Aimée), who is in fact a confidence trickster. A failed actor turned policeman (Fabrice Luchini) wants to nail her. The policeman meets Blanc, not in the course of duty, but because, like Blanc, he has serious stomach problems.



Co-stars . . . Alessandra Martines puts her arm around Bernard Tapie, by turn a business tycoon, football club owner, disgraced politician, bankrupt and now star of Claude Lelouch's new movie

It transpires that the policeman has cancer and there is nothing wrong with Blanc, but they both think it's the other way round. Why? Because a beautiful gastroenterologist (Alessandra Martines) wants to get her revenge on Blanc, who treated her shabbily in the past: the naughty girl switches the results of the two men's medical tests.

This may all sound very complicated, but it's not — at least not according to Lelouch, who proclaims that seeing is believing, and who goes on to argue that the only thing which can save people is religious faith and that "prayer is the best of medicines".

Hommes, Femmes: Mode d'Emploi bristles with the platitudes and truisms we have come to expect of Lelouch. They refer to more or less anything under the sun — women (like flowers, they should not be plucked too hastily if you want to keep them for a long time), the cinema (we learn at last, courtesy of Lelouch, why American films are more successful than French ones), America (where there are "more buyers than connoisseurs") and "Pascal's wager" (the French philosopher Blaise Pascal postulated that one had nothing to lose by wagering that God exists — which is what Blanc does with a vengeance).

The trouble is that early on in the proceedings Lelouch allows the film to become uncontrollably wordy. We have to endure several long scenes of banal cross-cut dialogue, almost as though the camera had became queasy and needed a rest.

Or perhaps Lelouch's idea was that you can't go on endlessly eating tripe *à la mode de Caen* and chips — all the characters' favourite dish — without risking indigestion. However that may be, the sight of more tripe (during an endoscopy session) may cause more than one spectator's stomach to heave.

Perhaps Lelouch was aware of that risk, for he immediately whisks his two main characters off to Lourdes by the first available helicopter. Tapie is at the controls and Luchini hangs on for dear life as they run into turbulence and studio hands do their best to make the chopper lurch convincingly.

The last shot of the movie shows Lelouch himself with his eye stuck to the camera viewfinder, as though unable to pull it away and look at the real world — a world he witters on about so doggedly, and whose "user's manual" he claims to possess. It is doubtful whether in his particular case a pilgrimage to Lourdes will do the job.

(August 29)

Dazzled at Deauville

Annette Vezin

MORE people than ever before attended the 22nd American Film Festival in Deauville, which ended on September 8. A record 40,000 tickets were sold, and several big stars, including Gena Rowlands, Gérard Depardieu, Christopher Walken, Eddie Murphy and Kevin Spacey, who was a great hit with festival-goers, turned up for the event at the Normandy seaside resort.

Deauville confirmed that the borderline between independent productions and movies made by the Hollywood majors has become increasingly blurred. It is by no means true that the independents have a monopoly of talent and creativity.

Take maverick producer Arnon Milchan, to whom the festival paid a tribute. Although he claims to have complete freedom of decision despite his close links with Time Warner, he has proved with his last two productions, Norman Jewison's Bogus and Joel Schumacher's A Time To Kill, that the US film industry has lost none of its ability to turn out utterly vacuous blockbusters.

Bogus, in which a little boy becomes a know-all with the help of Depardieu and Whoopi Goldberg, has several of the more hateful features of a certain type of American cinema. As for A Time To Kill, half of which seems to be taken up with people saying "objection, your honour", it confirms the continuing American craze for "trial movies" and proves yet again that some of the best-intentioned films are the worst.

The successful movies at Deauville stood out all the more. Todd Solondz's Welcome To The Dollhouse (joint winner of the jury prize), which tells the story of a teenage girl who is rejected by both her family and her school, was probably the most sensitive and personal movie at the festival.

Other memorable movies included Greg Mottola's Daytrippers (special prize), a road movie set in New York, and Nicole Holofcener's Walking And Talking, an intelligent film about women and friendship that refreshingly avoids two common mother and whore stereotypes. It has to be said, though, that Isabella Rossellini gives an excellent account in both those registers in Stanley Tucci and Campbell Scott's Big Night (critics' prize) and in Abel Ferrara's The Funeral.

Tucci, a novice director but experienced actor, thinks that independent productions have got into a rut because the people who finance them are like all other producers: they want to cut their risks to a minimum by going for stories which have already proved profitable. That is why movies like Pulp Fiction and The Usual Suspects have spawned countless scripts with similar plots.

That view was confirmed by John Carpenter, master exponent of the horror film, who presented Escape From LA: "It took me some time to accept the fact that I was obliged to make 'Carpenter movies'. I would have loved to make Westerns."

(September 10)

Success will never silence the critics

CLAUDE LELOUCH'S Hommes, Femmes: Mode d'Emploi, which has so far done very well at the box office, has provoked considerable controversy. This has had the effect of pointing up some interesting parallels between the world of the cinema and the political arena, *writes Jean-Michel Frodon.*

At the Venice Film Festival last month, the leading French producer Marin Karmitz described Hommes, Femmes: Mode d'Emploi as a "disgrace" and accused its director of "irresponsibility". Lelouch, currently touring the French provinces to promote his film, retorted that if that were the case he would go and make his films elsewhere, and threatened to ask Karmitz some embarrassing questions.

Tapie's top billing in the film was bound to ruffle feathers. Its selection to represent France, in competition, at Venice could only make matters worse. And the fact that the official French delegation threw a party at the magnificent Palazzo Pisani Moretta, attended by the French and Italian culture ministers, on the same evening that Hommes, Femmes: Mode d'Emploi was shown, only added fuel to the flames.

But then anything will help sell a movie as long as it is talked about — anything from rave reviews to demolition jobs, from Tapie's virtuous announcement that he was stepping down as a member of parliament to torrents of invective.

Characteristic of the whole affair has been the curious mixture of genres caused by the coming together of two people who are stars in very different worlds, but whose similarities are now evident.

Tapie is a political star, while Lelouch is a star director — he is the only French film-maker whose name is familiar to 75 per cent of the population. Tapie has taken political showmanship to dangerous extremes, while Lelouch has pursued his career as a showman in a perfectly "normal" way.

Hence the temptation to see Tapie's new acting career as a logical and, in the end, moral last leg of his itinerary: Bernard Tapie, *comediante tragediante,* should never have entered politics. In a sense, he found his true vocation when he became a Thespian.

And we are expected to thank Lelouch for having given him his chance. But that completely overlooks the social repercussions of a film that is being promoted as a piece of harmless entertainment.

Since "his" movie has been released, the hitherto ubiquitous Tapie has mostly kept silent. His director has been doing the talking on his behalf, and above all — which is new for Lelouch, who in the past has tended to handle his differences of opinion with critics more delicately — he has been talking like Tapie.

It is nothing new for Lelouch — or indeed other film-makers — to react to hostile reviews by pointing to healthy box office figures. But in addition to his new Tapie-like virulence of tone, the old arguments trotted out by Lelouch are particularly interesting because they resemble Tapie's own defence strategy when people first began to level accusations at him.

TAPIE would say: "What right have you to criticise me, since people love me? Why don't you lot stop bugging me and come and see how I'm mobbed when I visit street markets in Marseille." Lelouch says: "What right have you to criticise my film, since it's a box office success? Why don't you lot stop criticising me and come and see how full the cinemas are?"

That is what is known as populism, and it is an argument used by all demagogues, be they politicians or directors. It is tantamount to a flat refusal to be judged by broader ethical criteria, which go by the name of art or film criticism when a painting or movie is involved, and public-spiritedness when public life is concerned.

That refusal, incidentally, is the favourite weapon of that most aggressive of demagogues, the far-right National Front leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, who was once memorably worsted by Tapie when they had a stand-up argument on television.

Attempts to silence the critics became increasingly common in the eighties as the glorification of money-making became a fashionable ethos: the argument was that success at the box office was the ultimate proof of a work of art.

Yet those who resort to such arguments try to have it both ways: they repudiate the critics, yet are desperate for their approval. Here again there is a parallel with political mores: popularity is pronounced to be the alpha and omega of legitimacy, yet those with high opinion poll ratings grumble about not getting proper recognition from the same guardians of republican principles they themselves have helped to undermine by manipulating the media.

If the interaction of the "Lelouch case" and the "Tapie case" at least has the effect of highlighting those paradoxes, then the controversy over Hommes, Femmes: Mode d'Emploi will not have been a complete waste of time.

(September 5)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

Mother Russia calls for more heroines

Russian women are aspiring to careers and independence but patriots are urging them to do their duty and halt the population decline, writes **James Meek**

MORNING is a busy time in the Chernyshova household with 10 children locked in the eternal struggle for breakfast and bathroom. Large families have become the exception in Russia but with falling birth rates and more deaths, there is a growing push to produce more children.

Yevgeniya Chernyshova should have been a Heroine Mother. She had her first baby when she was an aviation student and since then she and her husband Valery have had a child every two years on average. They have produced 10 in all — the magic number that in Soviet times gave mothers Heroine status with the privileges (jumping food queues, mainly) the title entailed.

At one point in the eighties there were nine family members — five children, their parents and Chernyshova's parents — living in a two-roomed Moscow flat. Now they have five rooms but none of the children has left home.

Chernyshova, aged 40, whose hips tell of the burden but whose face looks 10 years younger, missed out on being a Heroine as the award lapsed with the Soviet collapse. Yet so worried are Russian authorities by the country's shrinking population that they are considering reviving it. In May, President Boris Yeltsin presented Chernyshova with a Medal of Honour for her achievements. However, it came without the privileges attached to the Heroine Mother title. "It's just a moral stimulus," said Chernyshova.

A growing chorus of patriots, Communists and sociologists is arguing that more than medals are needed to save the Russians from dying faster than they can be replaced. The country's low birth and high death rates have become a hot issue.

Latest figures from the national statistics committee show that, in the first half of 1996, 1.7 times more Russians died than were born. Without the trickle of refugees from the former Soviet republics the population of about 147 million would shrink frighteningly fast.

"The demographic situation in Russia at this time can, without exaggeration, be described as catastrophic," wrote Vladimir Borisov in a virulent article in the Russian Demographic Journal. The population decline has become one of the main weapons of the anti-government coalition of Communists and nationalists against President Yeltsin. They point out that the slump has coincided with economic reforms.

Victor Medkov, of Moscow State university's family sociology department, argued, however, that Russian women, like their counterparts in the West, had been choosing to have fewer children for more than 100 years.

"People don't have many children because they don't need them. Previously a big group of children was seen as a sign of wealth. Now it's the other way round," said Mr Medkov. He added that, while women had increasingly Western attitudes towards having children, Russian life expectancy was at Third World levels.

Russian women have an average of 1.4 children, about the same as women in prosperous Italy, which has one of the world's lowest birth rates. But while Italian men can expect to live to 75, the average life span of Russian men is 59 years. Although the latest figures on causes of death show a slight improvement, they still portray a country in chaos: the first half of 1996 saw 19,000 deaths from alcohol poisoning, 30,000 suicides, 21,000 murders and 13,000 fatal cases of tuberculosis.

Mr Medkov conceded that tougher economic conditions and changing social attitudes were squeezing the birth rate as women, usually living in cramped flats and compelled to go out to work, put off having children. Despite the Russian Orthodox Church's anti-abortion stance, hundreds of thousands of women take advantage of Russia's liberal abortion laws each year, and contraceptives are now readily available (there was tough Soviet opposition to the Pill).



Maternity wards are far less busy now that Russian women are no longer baby machines

Russian nationalists are acutely aware of the growing disparity between the country's great size, its dwindling population and the high birth rates of its Muslim and Chinese neighbours. Armchair geopoliticians in Moscow and Vladivostok compare the number of Russians with the number of unemployed people in China. The figures are close. It is this kind of thinking, Mr Medkov fears, that could lead to a more dictatorial approach to birth promotion in future.

Vladimir Borisov is among those who argue for radical action, accusing the moderates of being anti-family. "Among the intelligentsia, including demographers, there is a powerful anti-natal lobby, obstructing and sabotaging the drawing-up of any kind of programme to stimulate more births," he said.

"The media play a great role. They often promote a non-family, non-child, unhealthy, individualistic way of life. It needs to be steered in a different, healthier direction."

Russian women say they are worried about falling numbers of children, and complain bitterly about the lack of state support. Chernyshova gets a combined monthly allowance from the Russian and local authorities of just 80,000 roubles — about $15 — for each of her 10 children. But there is widespread hostility to talk of campaigns to increase the birth rate.

"I honestly think there's been such an overpopulation of the earth that there's no need at this stage to have more than two children, or three at most," said Margarita Grigoryants, mother of two and head of Moscow's only family planning centre. Her second child was born seven years after the first, when her husband got a pay rise.

Olga Belozorova, a gynaecologist in the south of the capital and mother of three, said: "People have become more conscious now. If before there were many families with five or 10 children, now it's two or three. Women have become more aware of how many they can cope with."

Chernyshova said she had no regrets and loved all her children. But she remembered with regret the pro-family campaign of the early 1980s, when the Soviet government introduced generous allowances for families with many children which sparked a baby boom — coinciding with worsening shortages of basic goods such as milk and baby food. "When people had to stand in these big queues, it only made them angry." — *The Observer*

Global fight for survival

RUSSIA is falling behind the rest of the world in a "demographic catastrophe", which could result in the population of 147 million shrinking by almost one million a year. In the first half of 1996, 1.7 times more Russians died than were born, up from 1.6 in the same period last year, *writes John Illman.*

The average life expectancy of Russian men is 59 years. This compares with 78 years or more in Japan, Sweden and Iceland. But Russia still fares better than the poorest countries where the figure is 43 and falling. By 2000, life expectancy in Ivory Coast, the Central African Republic, Congo, Uganda and Zambia will drop to 42, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Worldwide, population growth in this century is estimated to be 17 per cent, with the number of elderly increasing by 30 per cent. It is a cruel paradox that the success of modern health care is ever-increasing demand.

The WHO predicts that care of elderly dementia patients and replacement of ageing joints will be among the most pressing demands on health care systems in the next century. Russia's health care bills are being pegged back by an epidemic of coronary heart disease. Russia is now third in the coronary death league, behind Latvia and Lithuania.

Life and death league

	Birth rate per 1000	Death rate per 1000	Annual growth rate %
Russia	9	16	-0.6
UK	13	11	+0.2
Europe	11	12	-0.1
N. America	15	9	+0.7
S. America	25	7	+1.8
Africa	41	13	+2.6
Asia	24	8	+1.7
Australia	15	7	+0.8

Trials and tribulations

Harold Jackson

AMERICA ONLINE, the world's largest provider of commercial online services, aims to have 10 million subscribers by the end of the year. My credit card and I were, to put it mildly, surprised to find ourselves among their number, particularly since we had never joined in the first place.

This is a warning to treat giveaway discs as you would pit-bull terriers: with caution, as they can inflict a nasty bite.

The AOL freebie fell out of a box containing a new computer drive. "One month's FREE membership including 10 FREE hours online," it proclaimed. "No risk, no obligation." The word "free", in capitals, appeared eight times.

So I installed it and followed the sign-up routine, which included a request for my credit card number.

Reasoning that AOL was entitled to some security against excessive usage, I entered it and was given a sign-in name containing 10 letters and numerals. I couldn't remember it myself, so it seemed unlikely that my e-mail correspondents would. Not a good start.

I quickly discovered the service wasn't for me. I don't want to play games or chat expensively to people I don't know. I'd used about 30 minutes of my 10 FREE hours when I gave up. That was on April 16.

A week or two later I noticed that the fine print on the wrapper said that at the end of my free trial month I would automatically be charged $8.99 a month from then on.

It sounded suspiciously like inertia selling to me, so on May 13, three days before my time was up, I rang the toll-free number on the wrapper to make clear that I did not wish to continue my FREE trial. The woman at AOL assured me that my unmemorable sign-on would be removed from their records.

I deleted the software from my machine and dumped the disc and wrapper. Then, on June 20, I got my credit card bill — showing that AOL had charged me $8.99 on May 17, four days after I had cancelled.

I was annoyed but, since I no longer had the toll-free number and couldn't remember my sign-on name, I decided to write it off as a cock-up which I probably deserved for being so careless.

When my next bill showed that I'd been charged another $8.99 on June 17 I rang the credit card company to instruct them not to pay any further accounts from AOL. The woman was sympathetic but said that, since I had given a mandate to pay the bills, they had no discretion about making payments. I would have to sort it out with AOL. (In fact, National Consumer Council guidance suggests that a credit card firm disclaiming liability for a substandard service bought with its card may be in breach of the Consumer Credit Act.)

That's the point at which I saw red. No address is given on any of the material AOL distributes and I felt by now that I wanted something in writing, so I started delving around.

I discovered I am not alone. The final stage of a court case in which AOL's accounting practices will oblige it to pay about £14 million to settle a class action by subscribers in California was expected on September 20. The company is facing similar investigations by the attorney generals of 14 other US states. Its latest accounts show more than $7.5 million paid out last year to settle law suits.

At a national level, the US Federal Trade Commission is pursuing complaints that the company does not adequately warn people taking up its "free" offer that they will automatically be charged the monthly subscription unless they cancel.

ANOTHER complained he was being inundated with junk e-mail, which AOL is paid to distribute and which it then charged him to receive. And that seems likely to get worse. After the company's share price dropped from about $70 in May to less than $30 at the beginning of August, its chairman and chief executive, Steve Chase, said it hoped to rely more heavily on ad revenue rather than on subscription and usage fees.

The background to all this is the effort to underpin the company's explosive growth of the past three years. In that time it has acquired nine subsidiaries at a cost of $246 million. It is yet to see a return from most of them.

So AOL needs more subscribers and, according to industry analysts, is now stumping up something like $90 a head to attract them — through advertising and free discs. In the quarter ending June 30, the company reported recruiting 1.8 million new subscribers — but it lost 1.4 million, which more than halved the previous quarter's expansion rate.

I eventually got through on the toll-free line to another AOL person who tracked me down through my postcode. She said the system agreed with my version of events and that deductions from my credit card would be refunded. Some four months after my "free" trial, they were.

But the arithmetic bears examination. Assume, conservatively, that 25 per cent of a quarter's trial subscriptions are cancelled and that it then takes AOL two months to sort out its charges. That means 450,000 times $17.98 — $8,300,250 — sits in AOL's bank account for eight weeks accruing interest.

And then, the next quarter, AOL passes Go again. It must, at least, help pay the lawyers.

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Application forms and further particulars from the Personnel Office, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL (telephone +44 1203 523627) quoting reference 7/A/96 (please mark clearly on envelope). Closing date for applications 15 November 1996.

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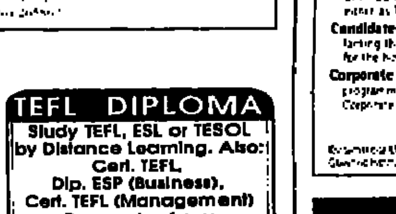
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GUARDIAN WEEKLY
September 22 1996

In the black and the red

Mark Cocker

RECENTLY our garden has been divided into two zones: the bottom half we know as the "red", while the section nearer the house is the "black". The colours also carry for us subtle moral overtones, the red being the less attractive part, while the black is the more pleasant, and whenever we sit outdoors we naturally favour this area.

However, my daily routine this summer has included at least one visit to the red zone, so I can inspect the creatures that have made it largely their own. They're red ants from the family *Myrmica* and we first noticed them during garden picnics, when our daughters would give a sudden, sharp cry and then break into inexplicable floods of tears.

Myrmica ants have powerful jaws and are able to deliver a painful nip. In fact, up to 45 per cent of an ant's weight can be acid and by flexing the abdomen they squirt the poison forward as they bite their victim. Fortunately, red ants form only small colonies of a few hundred workers, mere pinpricks in comparison with the mound-building wood ants of the family *Formica*.

This species can create a veritable metropolis housing up to 100,000 workers, and the hillock of plant debris can be several metres in circumference. It is on these nests that one can best study how the acid also acts as a powerful stimulant upon other members of the colony. If one disturbs a small area of ants on the mound it is remarkable how quickly their irritation spreads, converting the whole thing into a writhing mass of angry, bewildered insects. The acid also has a strong smell and this explains an old country name still used in parts of Norfolk for an ant, *pishamere*, which commemorates the urinous quality of the odour.

Given the aggressive nature of red ants it is not surprising that their principal form of prey is other insects. Even the black ants that occupy the calmer half of our garden fall victim to the *Myrmica*. One of the more macabre sights this summer was a team of red ants inexorably dragging a black queen, which was about five times bigger than each of them, down the entrance to their nest.

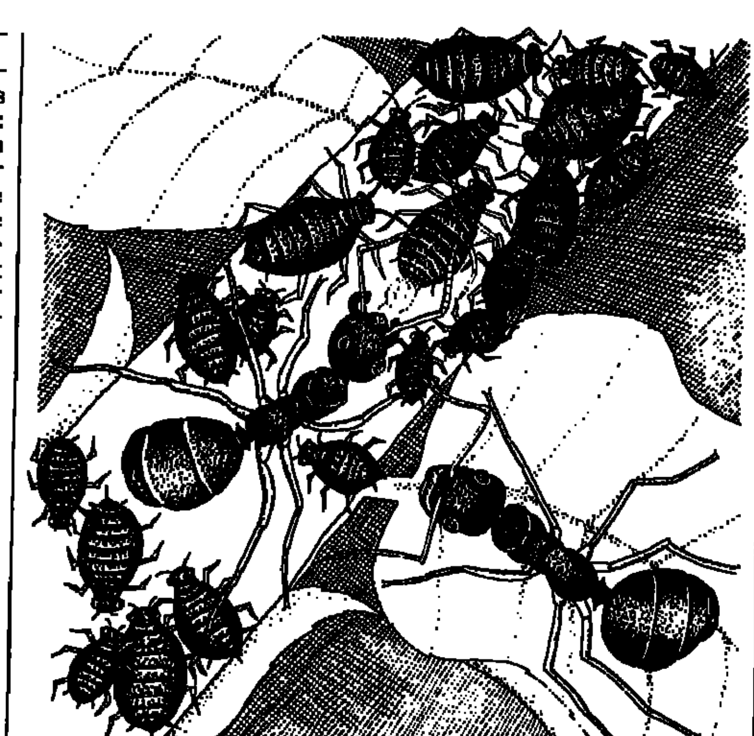


ILLUSTRATION: ANN HOBDAY

BY CONTRAST with these marauding predators, the black ants, *Lasius niger*, the commonest species in British gardens, seem deeply benign. They have no bite and gain most of their food in an extraordinary fashion. This has been most evident on our rose bushes, where the ants tend large numbers of aphids. Feeding on the plant's sugar-rich sap, the aphids excrete a sweet milk that the ants collect and then eat themselves. In return for this harvest, the ants protect their aphids from other predators, such as ladybirds, and also regularly clean them.

Black ants are quite literally participants in a pastoralist society. Keeping the aphids together in manageable clusters they constantly stroke the herd with their antennae to stimulate the production of the milk, which they then transport back to the nest. For us the only drawback with the regime is the positive effect the ants have on the aphids' own breeding success, since this entire insect economy is underpinned by our slowly diminishing roses.

However, we are not unduly concerned about either the black or even the red societies sharing our garden, especially when we compare their impact with that of ants elsewhere in the world. Take, for instance, the solitary species from South America known as the *veinticuatro* — a name that refers to the 24 hours of fever and pain inflicted by a single bite from this 2cm monster.

Bridge Zia Mahmood

DO YOU know what a backward finesse is? It occurs in a position such as this:

♠ K J 9
♠ 10 8 4 3 — ♠ Q 7 6
♠ A 5 2

South, who has to make three tricks from this spade suit, has deduced from the bidding that East has the queen. Instead of taking the normal finesse, South takes a backward finesse by first leading the jack from dummy. East must cover with the queen, whereupon South wins with the ace and leads towards dummy's K9 for a finesse of the nine.

This is the version of the backward finesse that you'll find in the textbooks, but a true backward finesse ought to involve leading away from, rather than towards, a tenace such as the ace and queen. Look at this deal from a recent tournament in Miami. This is your hand at love all:

♠2 ♥973 ♦3 ♣QJ1098642

The bidding proceeds like this:

South You	West	North	East
	2♦(1)	2♥	Dble(2)
No	2♠(3)	3♦	4♠
?			

(1) A conventional opening showing a weak two bid in either major. (2) Showing spade support and the values for a game try at least. (3) Showing a minimum weak two bid in spades.

You don't have much idea who can make what, but you feel that an eight-card suit deserves a mention, so you contest with five clubs. West and North both pass, but East doubles. You fear the worst, but partner is about to put down a suitable dummy:

♠ 6 3
♥ A Q 8 5 2
♦ A Q 10 4
♣ A 5

♠ 2
♥ 9 7 3
♦ 3
♣ Q J 10 9 8 6 4 2

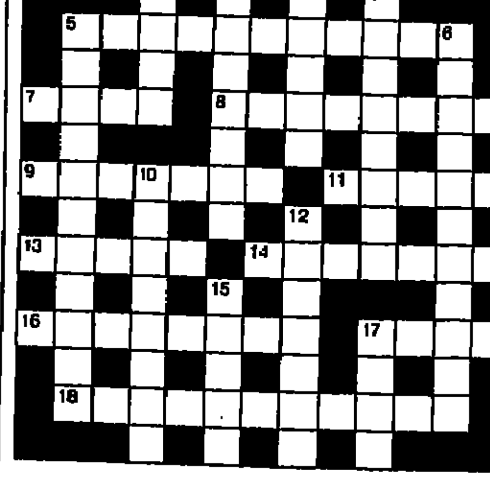
West leads the jack of spades. East wins with the ace and returns the suit. You ruff and lead the queen of clubs. West plays low, and you play . . .

Remember, "if they don't cover, they don't have it". You go up with the ace of clubs, and the king falls from East! You're not out of the woods yet, though — East is bound to have both red-suit kings for his bidding and final double, so you must avoid the loss of two heart tricks. Normal finesses will not help you. Do you have another plan?

You could run all the clubs, reducing to ♥AQ and ♦AQ in dummy. If East comes down to ♥Kx ♦Kx, you can play the ace and queen of one red suit to force him to lead into the other tenace. But East is an expert, and will not be so obliging. He will retain Kxx in one red suit, perhaps discarding the jack to deceive you, and the singleton king in the other. You will now have to guess the position, and as the great poker player Amarillo Slim was fond of saying, "guessers are losers, neighbour!"

To make your contract without guessing, lead the queen of diamonds from dummy at the fourth trick! East will win it with the king, but will now be endplayed in three suits. If he returns a spade, you can discard a heart, ruff in dummy, and discard your other heart loser on the ♦A. A heart or a diamond return into dummy's tenace will also allow you to make the rest of the tricks. "Lucky hand," you say to your partner. "All the finesses were wrong!" ©

Quick crossword no. 332



Across

5 English navigator and explorer (7,4)
7 Bankruptcy (4)
8 Mixture — not simple (8)
9 Report (7)
11 Spirited (5)
13 Monk's dwelling place (5)
14 Guard (7)
16 Agreeable (8)
17 Line of junction (4)
18 Union representative (4,7)

Down

1 Drive — turn round quickly (4)
2 Section of theatre seats (7)
3 Foe (5)
4 Settler (8)
5 Rung before services (6,5)
6 Name of three English monarchs (4,7)
10 Switchboard worker (8)
12 Pig's foot (7)
15 Untrue (5)
17 Stretch over — bridge (4)

Last week's solution

RUFF PAMPHLET
O E C L A A
BURN ATLANTIC
I O C I G E K
NECROPOLIS
S I A N A A H
OBTUSE FRIDAY
N Y T C I D P
AGGRESSION
A B U U T T O
CREVASSE MISS
T A R O V I
SHREDDED LESS

Chess Leonard Barden

JONATHAN PARKER, the 20-year-old Cambridge student, edged nearer grandmaster strength when he finished runner-up at last month's British Championship and beat the No1 seed in the final round.

J Parker v M Sadler

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 e3 0-0 6 cxd5 Nxd5 7 Bc4 Nxc3 8 bxc3 c5 9 0-0 Qc7 10 Qe2 Bg4 11 Ba3 Nd7 12 Rac1 Qa5 13 Bb2 Nb6 14 Bb3 cxd4 This was the final round, with a possible share in the title at stake, so the opening is naturally cautious. Here 14 . . . c4 15 Bxc4 Nxc4 16 Qxc4 Be6 17 Qe2 Qxa2 18 c4 Rfc8 gives Black a passed pawn and the bishop pair, but 15 Bd1! (planning e4) Bxf3 16 Qxf3! Qxa2 17 Qe2 followed by e4 and f4 starts a dangerous attack.

15 cxd4 Rfc8 16 Qd2 Qb5? The turning point: Simply Qxd2 17 Nxd2 Bd7 keeps an edge for Black, who has a 2-1 Q-side pawn majority.

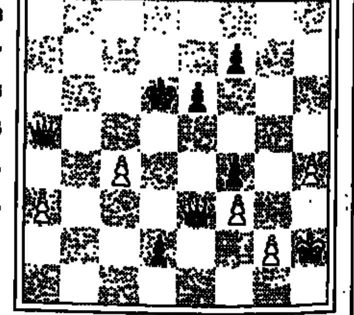
17 Ba3! Bf6 18 Ne5! A pawn sacrifice opens up White's bishop pair. **Bxe5 19 dxe5 Qxe5 20 Qb4 Be2 21 Rfe1 Rxc1 22 Rxc1 e6 23 Qe7! Bd3 24 Rd1 Qa5** The dark squares round Black's king are a fatal weakness. If Ba6 25 Rd8+ Rxd8 26 Qxd8+ Kg7 27 Bf8+ mates. **25 Bb2 Qf5 26 Bc2! Nd5 27 Qxb7 Resigns.**

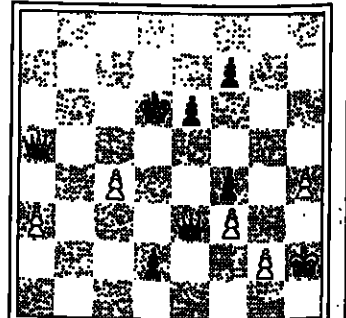
The team of former champions won 27½-22½ against the world's best women players in the Foxtrot tournament at the London Hilton. Vassily Smyslov, aged 75, is the best veteran yet and scored well, but he was upstaged in this game. Ketevan Arakhamia from Georgia and Scotland's Jonathan Grant met, over the board and romantically, at a tournament. Now qualified for UK teams, Ketevan became one of a handful of women to achieve a grandmaster norm at men's level.

Arakhamia-Grant v Smyslov

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 Ng5 d5 5 exd5 Na5 6 Bb5+ c6 7 dxc6 bxc6 8 Be2 h6 9 Nf3 e4 10 Ne5 Bd6 11 d4 exd3 12 Nxd3 Qc7 13 b3 0-0 14 Bb2 Ne4 15 Nc3 Nxc3 16 Bxc3 c5 17 h3 c4 18 Nb2 Be5 19 Qd2 Bxc3 20 Qxc3 Re8 21 Nd1 f5 22 Ne3 f4? 23 Nd5 Qf7 24 Qxa5 f3 25 gxf3 Qxf3 26 0-0-0 Rxe2 27 Rhg1 cxb3 28 axb3 Bf5 29 Nf6+ Kf7 30 Qc7+! Re7 (Kxf6 31 Qxg7+ leads to mate) **31 Rxg7+ Kxg7 32 Qxe7+ Kh8 33 Rg1 Resigns.**

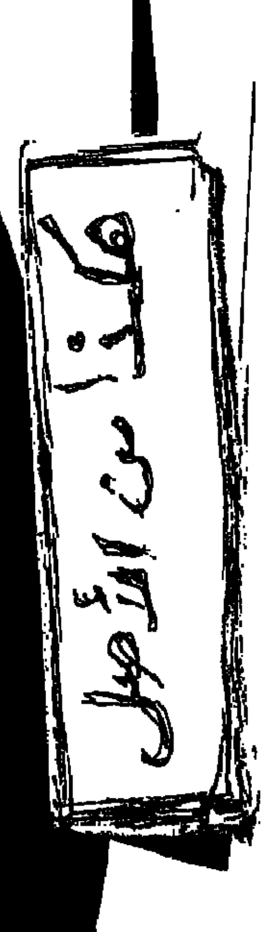
No 2439





Rogers v Korchnoi, Biel 1986. Too many plausible moves can confuse the strongest. Korchnoi as Black had to choose between (a) 1 . . . Qd4 2 Qd8+ Ke5 (b) 1 . . . Qd4 2 Qd8+ Kc5 (c) 1 . . . Qe1 and (d) 1 . . . d1Q. Two of these draw, one wins, the other loses. Korchnoi selected the loser. Can you decide which alternatives match the stated outcomes?

No 2438: 1 . . . Qh1+ 2 Kg4 h5+ 3 Kf4 Qf1+ 4 Ke5 Qf5+ 5 Kd6 If 5 Kd4 c2 6 Qc5 Qe4+ 7 Kc3 c1Q+ **Qe6+ 6 Kc7** If 6 Kc5 Qxe3+ 7 Rd4 c2 **Qe7+ 7 Kb6 Qxa7+ 8 Kxa7 c2 wins.**



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Freedom for a captive of history

Thomas Clarkson, the forgotten hero of the anti-slavery movement, is finally being honoured, writes **John Ezard**

THOMAS CLARKSON found the cause which set his life on fire when he was 25. When he won victory in Parliament 48 years later, 800,000 slaves were immediately freed across the British Empire and millions of others gained liberty soon after.

Wordsworth wrote a sonnet to him, Coleridge called him "the giant with one idea" and Hazlitt said he was incomparable. Yet Clarkson became one of British history's great forgotten reformers.

This wrong will finally be righted — in the 150th anniversary year of his death — when he gains a place in Westminster Abbey later this month. A memorial plaque honouring this "friend to slaves" will be unveiled close to the grave of William Wilberforce, the fellow-campaigner who is mainly credited with ending the 19th century trade in humans.

Wilberforce was buried there 163 years ago by public subscription amid worldwide acclaim. Clarkson's name was so eclipsed that two years ago, when Mark Covey joined Anti-Slavery International — which Clarkson helped found — he had never heard of him.

The Abbey ceremony on September 26 will finally mark the healing of an ancient rift between the two families. "Terrible things" said by Wilberforce's sons were blamed for consigning Clarkson's memory to the shadows after his death.

Wilberforce's descendant, the retired law lord Lord Wilberforce, aged 89, is acting as a patron for the service, alongside a member of the family, Richard Clarkson, aged 90.

Thomas Clarkson has been called Britain's first single-issue campaigner. He was the agitator, researcher and propagandist who roamed Britain unearthing the facts which appalled public and Parliament into banning the slavery trade.

At a time when much of his class was gaining from the profits of slavery, Clarkson investigated and exposed the mortality rates on slave vessels: 45 per cent "under favourable circumstances", 80 per cent "in many other cases".

He travelled with two exhibits in a chest to show the public. One was a print of a deck cross-section which illustrated overcrowding on slave ships. The other was a display of African workmanship. To people who questioned the economics of abolitionism, he said: "You don't have to trade in human beings. You can trade in artefacts."

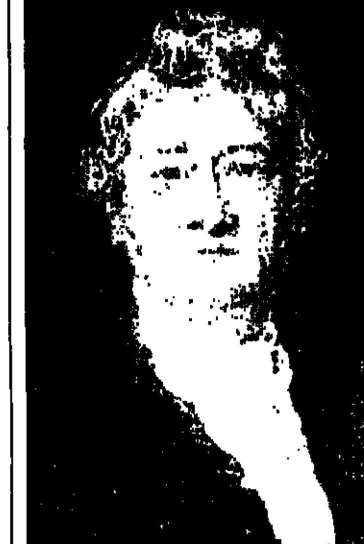
Once, searching for a sailor he knew had evidence against the trade, he boarded every ship in Deptford, Woolwich, Chatham, Sheerness and Portsmouth. He found his witness on the 57th ship he boarded and the man testified. He collected testimony from a total of 20,000 sailors on slave ships.

"To his contemporaries, he was the driving force behind the campaign," says Anti-Slavery International. Coleridge called him "a moral steam engine".

Clarkson's father was a vicar and headmaster of Wisbech grammar school in Cambridgeshire. Thomas, who got a first in maths at Cambridge, intended to follow his father. The turning point of his life came in 1785 when he entered a university Latin essay prize competition.

The set topic was "Is it right to enslave men against their will?" Clarkson won but the horrors he found in his research gave him sleepless nights. Shortly afterwards, while riding to London, he had a transforming experience. It was his road to Damascus, except that it took him in a secular direction, into a lifelong commitment to work against enslavement.

Through publishing his essay he met Wilberforce's adviser John Newton, author of the hymn Amazing Grace. By coincidence, the prime minister, William Pitt, who was an abolitionist, was then urging Wilberforce to take up the issue. Wilberforce, a young, eloquent MP in search of a cause, was hesitant; but Clarkson's essay helped tip the balance.



Thomas Clarkson: dedicated campaigner PHOTO: MARY EVANS

The two men campaigned amicably and intensively all their lives. Slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1833. Wilberforce died that year. Clarkson was a worn-out 73-year-old.

Even before he died in 1846, Wilberforce's influential sons — an archdeacon and a bishop — began besmirching Clarkson's name. Keen to stress their father's role, they objected to a chart Clarkson had left showing how anti-slavery support had spread. They accused him of trying to steal sole credit. They dismissed him as "a shabby old romantic" because of his links with Wordsworth and Coleridge.

Privately they apologised to Clarkson for this. But they left their charges on record in their biography of their father.

The Dictionary Of National Biography, published in 1888, says: "It is almost impossible to overrate the effect of Clarkson's unceasing perseverance in the cause.

"Before he entered on the crusade slave-holding was considered — except by a chosen few — as a necessary part of social economy. It was largely due to Clarkson's exertions that long before his death it had come to be regarded as a crime."

But this failed to establish his name in British memory, though he has always been honoured in Africa and the Caribbean and by American negroes.

Sebastian Wilberforce, a descendant of the MP, says: "I am very pleased indeed that he is getting recognition. I wonder why it hasn't happened before."

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

***WHAT IS* the most commonly believed untruth?**

EITHER "There is a God" or "There is not a God". — *Robert Evans, Great Sutton, Cheshire*

THERE are three: "Your cheque is in the post"; "Of course I love you, darling"; and "I'm the man from the ministry and I am here to help you". — *Terry Philpot, Oxted, Surrey*

THAT beliefs can be divided into truths and untruths. — *Kevin Tweedy, London*

***IS THERE* any single sporting contest longer than the five-day cricket Test match?**

THE Paris-Dakar rally; the Whitbread Round the World Yacht Race; the Tour de France (Tour of Spain, Tour of Italy); Trans Australia Ultrathon (a running race across Australia); the dog-sled race across Alaska; any season-long Championship (Grand Prix, Football Leagues); any mountaineering expedition (if mountaineering is a sport); Wimbledon (may be counted as a single event for the champion). — *Gareth Yardley, Edinburgh*

I AM told that North American native lacrosse matches used to span a pitch several miles square and continue over the summer. They were often violent contests substituting, at times, for warfare. Maybe modern wars are the longest sport? — *James Strapp, Mortlake, London*

***ARE* Britons hygienically any worse off than their European neighbours as a result of the absence of a bidet in the bathroom?**

THE inability to wash socks and selected items of underwear in such a contraption could certainly be seen as a lack of cleanliness; plus, the absence of a champagne cooler in the bathroom is sheer negligence! — *Doug Proctor, New Caledonia*

NO, provided they have a shower and can do handstands. — *C A Hawkins, Utrecht, Netherlands*

Any answers?

***WHAT* was the original cock-and-bull story?** — *Anne Mackenzie, Arbroath*

***IS IT* possible to gather manna, the food which, according to the Old Testament, saved the Children of Israel from starvation in the wilderness?** — *B B Sykes, Thames Ditton, Surrey*

***WHY* are there 21 guns in a salute?** — *Richard Hartley, Plymouth*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. Readers with access to the Internet can respond to Notes & Queries via http://go2.guardian.co.uk/nq/

A Country Diary

Jeremy Smith

MACQUARIE ISLAND, southern Pacific Ocean: The biggest land plant on this chill, windswept oceanic outpost is the tussock grass, for we have no trees or shrubs. However, the biggest plant of all is a seaweed, a giant of its kind growing to a length of more than 10 metres. It also occurs in southern New Zealand where its flat chocolate-coloured fronds are said to have been used by the Maoris to make waterbags. The fronds terminate in several long, thong-like straps which are slippery and buoyant, and slide sensuously over the surface of the cold, restless water.

Bull-kelp is found in the lower parts of the rocky shore, where each plant is fixed by its basal structure, descriptively called a holdfast. The plants sometimes prove stronger than the rock, which may break away during high seas. Piles of weed left ashore after storms include plants still attached to cobbles or boulders, some of which are too heavy to lift. The dead weed has an importance of its own. As it gradually rots in the wet climate to a foul-smelling slime, paddled by penguin feet and compressed and fertilised by passing seals, it is colonised by countless kelp fly larvae. These provide in their millions a major food source for birds. When the rotting piles are disturbed by high tides the maggots are released to float in the surf, where they are eagerly picked at by squadrons of elegant kelp gulls bobbing just beyond the curl of the breakers.

On land the sticky, stinking mess is probed by starlings and dabbled by black ducks seeking the same morsels. Two other birds in earlier times are thought to have largely subsisted on this unlikely food supply. One was a parakeet, the other a small rail. Both were made extinct late last century by the voracious descendants of ships' cats, which are still here today playing havoc with the smaller nesting seabirds.

Letter from France Sophie Masson

De Gaulle's dream turns dark

"*EVERY* Friday night there was a dance here. Ah yes, I used to love dancing, and drug along my husband and my mother. She made the pastries, and we used to push away the chairs. I tell you, it was quite something."

We live in the former village café and people still sit outside in the sun and talk about how it used to be. On slow warm days it's mostly the old people who are here: Madame over the way whose memories stretch back to before the first world war, and another who sweeps at the air with her hands and asks whether there are farms "where we come from".

Once, there were 300 small farmers around La Cassaigne: the village supported several shops, two or three rival cafés, and there were those famous dances every Friday. Now, there are three big farms, no shops and no cafés. But there is the odd dance or two, put on by the commune to earn some money, and in the afternoon the street fills like an aviary as the children come home from school in the nearby town and their parents suddenly appear from deep inside their houses.

Last Saturday night, techno music blasted down the old streets. The shutters of the villagers stayed closed but old Madame said: "Ah, it's only *la jeunesse* making a bit of a racket." She may prefer "le bal à papa" with the sound of accordions and the jokes of people who know each other well, but she's long past tut-tutting about *la jeunesse*.

In the fields, poppies and daisies fight a losing battle with efficiently grown wheat and oats, every square millimetre is farmed, every arable hill ploughed, and my sister has battles every day with the commune, dominated by farmers, which wants to pull out trees and ditch rivers. The farmers represent the first generation to have escaped peasant life and have no love for the land they have had to battle for centuries. It is ironic to think that De Gaulle's dream of preserving the French countryside, otherwise known as the Common Market, should now have caused the very changes he was so afraid of.

There are still young people as well as old but few of them work on farms. Thirty years ago, the villages started to empty as farm work was mechanised and industrialised. Fifteen years ago, newcomers started buying up the ancient houses and the villages were revitalised.

But where are those who were forced to leave? On the city outskirts. They, along with the Arabs, are known as the *zonards*: deracinated folk whose horizon is the supermarket and the social service centres where more and more bureaucrats battle with the ever-worsening consequences of too much, too fast.

The bubble of progress has burst in France: people are going through what the British began to experience in the seventies, but with added layers of racial and social hatreds. The sense of siege, of change, is palpable in the cities. But in La Cassaigne, Madame still dangles her basket down on a string from her first-floor window, to take delivery of goods from the baker and grocer; and her 92-year-old eyes are bright as she calls out to us for a glass of coffee, just like in the old days, when the café was full every Friday night.

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Pulp gives music award to War Child charity

Nick Varley

THE outsiders, Pulp, last week won the £25,000 UK Mercury Music Prize and presented the money to the music business charity aiding Bosnia.

With the hot pre-award favourites, Oasis, absent on their fraught and now aborted tour of America, judges narrowed the short-list of 10 to two contenders: Pulp and the veteran folk performer, Norma Waterson.

Simon Frith, chairman of the judges, described the decision to award the prize to Pulp rather than Waterson as the most difficult in the five-year history of the event, the British music industry's answer to literature's Booker Prize. "We found it very difficult to judge between Pulp's Different Class and Norma Waterson's Norma Waterson."

To loud applause, Pulp's front man, Jarvis Cocker, accepted the award but immediately gave the prize money to War Child, the music industry's charity, which recorded an album of various artists last year. It was also one of the nominees.

Cocker said: "I hope I speak for everybody in the band when I say we are very pleased to have the award. But in actual fact we've had our award already because quite a lot of people have bought the album.

"What we should like to do is instigate a new award here: the Pulp Music Award. The contenders are two records: War Child and the child of war. The winner is War Child."

Tony Crean, who devised the charity project, went onto the stage to accept Pulp's award and said: "I only wish Pulp could have been on the album."

He was joined by Brian Eno, a pioneer of ambient music and former member of Roxy Music, who helped in the production of the album, which was recorded in one day and distributed within a week.

War Child has so far raised £1.8 million for various schemes in Bosnia, including a £400,000 donation to the building of a music centre in Mostar.

Mr Eno gave details of the various schemes which have benefited when the album nomination was read out at the awards ceremony at the Grosvenor House Hotel in London.

After Pulp's gesture he said: "That was completely out of the blue and really nice of them. It will help the schemes running in Bosnia."

Earlier, Oasis songwriter Noel Gallagher said he thought his band deserved to win the prize but added that he thought others might and said: "I hope whoever does win it donates it all to charity."

Front man . . . Jarvis Cocker gives a victory salute

Shakespeare of the North

Norwegians glory in taking risks with Ibsen's plays, as **Michael Billington** discovers in Oslo

I HAVE just met Henrik Ibsen in Oslo. Not literally. But, attending the city's fifth International Ibsen Festival, I found I had never been so sharply aware of a dead dramatist's haunting presence.

Every morning, in the Grand Café, I would stare in fascination at the table where Ibsen habitually sat and which is laid out as if in expectation he might turn up. And I visited the sombre apartment — now a museum — where he spent the last 11 years of his life and wrote John Gabriel Borkman and When We Dead Awaken.

Ibsen is everywhere in Oslo: not least on the four stages of the National Theatre where, during the festival, productions from China, Russia, Israel, the Czech Republic and Wales alternate with native work. But Ibsen's domination of Norwegian drama and his world stature raise their own problems — even more acute than those we face with Shakespeare. Should his work be treated with respectful reverence or be open to endless reinterpretation? Do you treat him as a "classic" or do you cut, rewrite, adapt and update?

Ellen Horn, director of the National Theatre in Oslo, told me that attitudes vary wildly from country to country, while the Norwegians seem to be divided on the issue. "Germany and Italy do the most experimental productions. Britain and the United States the most traditional. Norway is somewhere in the middle but our goal is to find new ways." Indeed, one talk in a symposium was called The Ibsen Tradition — An Artistic Straitjacket?

My own view is that, as a general rule, living writers should be treated with absolute respect: a play's fate, after all, hinges on its first performance. But a classic achieves what Jonathan Miller calls an "afterlife" in which it is open to successive reinterpretation. Proof of a classic's vitality lies in its susceptibility to new staging and ability to yield unexpected meanings. As Peter Sellars says: "A classic is a house we're still living in."

What I discovered in Oslo is that Ibsen still blazingly lives, that he is capable of being performed in any number of ways. The most radical example I saw was a new Hedda Gabler staged by Stein Winge, Norway's leading director. I expected a variation on a familiar theme: a portrait of a whaleboned woman stifled by a hopeless marriage and destroyed by her vain desire to seek power over another human being. I couldn't have been more wrong.

Winge updates the play to the 1920s. His Hedda, 29-year-old Iren Reppen, best known as a cabaret artist, is a wild, sexy, headstrong creature who is clearly as much trapped by her inheritance as by her marriage: at one point, lying on a vast circular red table in a peignoir, she suggestively points her pistol straight between the lips of General Gabler's portrait. She is also a bulimic who stuffs herself with sponge cake in order to throw up and, at the end, instead of playing a frenzied melody on the piano, she dances madly on the tabletop.

Winge's production has been fiercely attacked, not least for its use of an early draft of the play: one that omits Judge Brack's famous last line ("People don't do such things"). And I can see rational objections to the concept: wouldn't a 20th century Hedda have options other than suicide, such as simply packing her bags and leaving? Even so, I found Winge's production constantly alive.

A similar radicalism pervades the National Theatre's startling new production of The Wild Duck, directed by the Swede Ragnar Lyth. Photography provides the key metaphor for the play: it begins with a piercing flashlight, uses photographic images to evoke old Werle's opening party, shows Hedvig developing pictures of the wild duck in her father's portable darkroom and Hjalmar Ekdal forcing his wife to confront the truth under powerful arc lights. It is a highly conceptual production but the central metaphor — of photographic images as dependent on light but developed in darkness, like self-knowledge — is brilliantly sustained.

Norwegians, you feel, worship Ibsen; yet need to escape from the oppressive Ibsen tradition. You could see that in the way a youngish audience roared its approval of the Welsh Volcano Theatre's How To Live: both a spirited, irreverent, erotic send-up of classic Ibsen themes and motifs (such as love versus duty and the preoccupation with pistols) and an affirmation of Ibsen's revolutionary status.

Ibsen's polymorphous diversity was also proved by Terry Hands's production of The Pretenders that highlighted the work's Shakespearean quality. This study of power battles in 13th century Norway, with the single-minded Haakon winning out over the self-doubting Skule, was thrillingly staged in a world of circumambient darkness illumined by glowing braziers and individual spotlights.

It was a richly stimulating festival and one that underlined the uncanny parallels between Ibsen and Shakespeare. Both are simultaneously local and universal figures. Both have spawned their own global industry and literature. Both are also at the heart of a continuing debate about reinterpretation. The key difference is that we know infinitely more about Ibsen's life and dramatic methods. And, as this festival showed, it is a measure of his greatness that he can be constantly redefined. Ibsen taught us that we have to free ourselves from the tyranny of dead conventions and the ghosts of the past: the lesson has clearly not been lost on his current interpreters.

From the mouths of babes . . . How To Live, an irreverent Welsh send-up of classic Ibsen MORTEN KROGVOLD

Half-cheer for Hallé's new hall

CLASSICAL MUSIC
Andrew Clements

EIGHT years after the city council gave the go-ahead, and less than four since building work began, Manchester has a new concert hall, and the Hallé Orchestra at last has a purpose-built home. The Bridgewater Hall will be opened officially by the Queen in December, but the Hallé's inaugural concert of English music, conducted by its music director Kent Nagano, took place last week, with champagne for every member of the audience and fireworks and a light show afterwards.

First impressions of the building are striking, especially when illuminated at night, with the glass prow of the main entrance obliquely aligned to the road alongside. The 2,400-seater hall is plain, comfortable and sensibly decorated in light woods, with no trace of the garish colour scheme of Birmingham's Symphony Hall.

Acoustically, comparisons with Birmingham are inevitable, and on first encounter the Bridgewater Hall does not possess that superb auditorium's welcoming warmth of tone and control of detail.

The sound can be fine-tuned, and no doubt will be over the coming season, but at present from a seat in the circle it seems to present a perplexing bundle of paradoxes. The reverberation seems generous, yet the sound seems to lack body and presence.

Some of the climaxes, especially in the final pages of Walton's Belshazzar's Feast that ended the programme, were poorly defined, but it does treat solo voices very kindly — Thomas Allen's crisply dramatic singing in Belshazzar came across as immediately as anyone could wish.

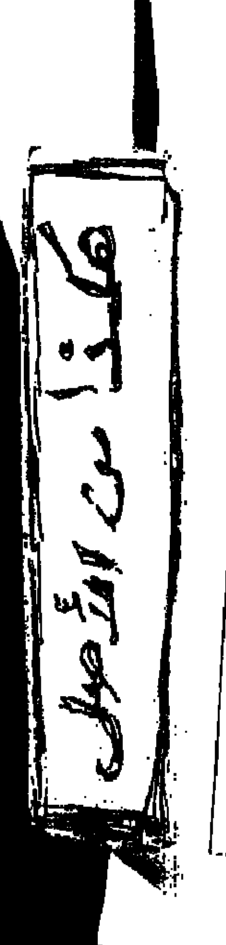
There were moments in this concert that suggested the orchestra was finding its feet; Elgar's Enigma Variations was peculiarly uninvolving, though Nagano's very measured tempi did not help that, and the Walton was sometimes choppy and brittle.

New music is taking a prominent place in the opening celebrations. The Hallé has commissioned no fewer than three pieces for its first pair of concerts, all from composers closely associated with Nagano and the orchestra.

On separate occasions last week it gave the premieres of works by Thomas Adès and John Adams, while the opening night programme began with George Benjamin's Sometime Voices, a setting for baritone (William Dazeley), chorus and orchestra of part of Caliban's "Be not afeard" speech from The Tempest.

It was a strangely disappointing response to such a commission, predominantly quiet and restrained, with the solo voice stretching out on long, reflective lines while the chorus supplies mainly wordless accompaniments and the orchestra decorates them with Benjamin's typically refined, evanescent textures.

The scoring contains a mandolin and a banjo to conjure Caliban's "twangling instruments", but the effect is not at all pictorial, and sounded distinctly uncelebratory in this context.



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Adam Cooper (left) as the Swan and Scott Ambler as the Prince perform a duet in Swan Lake PHOTOGRAPH: HENRIETTA BUTLER

Ballet steps into West End

THE first classical ballet to run in a commercial West End theatre for 75 years — as its promoters claim — launched its premiere in London last week intent on demonstrating the growing popularity of dance, *writes Owen Bowcott*.

But while the newly-choreographed production of Swan Lake by Adventures in Motion Pictures at the Piccadilly theatre — using male dancers in the lead roles — was widely praised, some critics warned *sotto voce* that its initial eight-week run might prove over-ambitious. What is indisputable is the sharp rise in audiences recently.

"There is a growing interest in ballet and dance," said the company's producer and manager, Catherine Doré. "People used to think it was posh, but it's not. We want to be populist. We have kept Tchaikovsky's musical score and re-choreographed it.

"All the steps are different and the swans are played by men not women. It may sound odd, but swans are huge powerful creatures, not fluffy ducks."

A rose-tinted spectacle

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

"SHE'S not far," Mr Knightley tells Emma, when she complains that the marriage of Harriet has robbed her of her friend. "Almost half a mile," complains her father in complete sympathy. Things that go on in the small town of Highbury indeed appear to be "of greater interest than the movement of armies".

But in illustrating the small microcosm of the world Jane Austen inhabited with such extraordinary precision and perception, there is no need to make it as cosy and picture-postcard as Douglas McGrath does in Emma. The whole thing gives off a pungent smell of antimacassars, fatally weakening, even with its insistent underscore of music, the hard-nosed sense of reality Austen also possessed.

This is, of course, the way to make a heritage movie. But it is not the way Ang Lee went with Sense And Sensibility and it is why McGrath's effort, able in other directions as it is, is comfortably outshone by Ang Lee's.

This is such a genteel, perfectly decorated world that you are almost surprised when anyone shows such a vulgar thing as emotion.

How on earth, one is forced at times to think, are this lot going to procreate children after the carefully engineered wedding banns are read? Would they even be able to undress in front of each other? Tea-cosy Austen encourages people to believe that this was not a great writer but one totally, if perfectly, stuck in the only milieu she knew.

Fortunately, McGrath has the benefit of a good to excellent cast and generally orchestrates the central love stories well. Like Knightley, he follows with some amusement Emma's bewildering excursions into other people's hearts and, when it finally comes to her own being touched, accomplishes what could have been a mawkish scene well.

Gwyneth Paltrow is a formidable Emma, who manages to suggest that much of her polite scheming is a mask for her own lack of experience and potential emptiness.

Toni Collette too, as the confused, fluttery, not quite classy enough Harriet, longing first for Mr Elton and then Mr Knightley but, in the end, happily coupled to someone else, gives us a very satisfactory portrait, and if Juliet Stevenson outshines them both in the easier part of the ghastly woman who becomes Mrs Elton, that is par for the course. She is a most remarkable actress, able to suggest in her minute examination of the cake Emma gives her with tea practically everything about her character.

The men go through their paces well enough. Jeremy Northam is a forthright Mr Knightley, giving Emma what for when she carelessly wounds Sophie Thompson's spinsterish Miss Bates, while still suggesting that she is the apple of his eye. Alan Cumming's Mr Elton plainly shows that he deserves what he has got in Mrs E.

For a moment I thought Ewan McGregor as Frank Churchill, coming upon Emma stuck in the river with her horse and trap, was going to harden up the proceeding with an injection of iron. But it comes to nothing, as does his part in the end.

What one misses is a sense that this tiny world accurately reflects the larger one outside. It seems too glowingly self-satisfied. Despite its considerable subsidiary virtues, it makes one hope that there will be a little time before other Austen novels such as Mansfield Park or Northanger Abbey are brought to our attention on the screen. For the moment, enough is enough.

You could call John Grisham's A Time to Kill a modern variant of To Kill A Mockingbird. But you'd have to be perverse to do so, since this grossly overlong story of a white lawyer defending a black man against a charge of murder in Mississippi homes in on some pretty reactionary sentiments.

We are asked to identify with Samuel L. Jackson's fond father, whose 10-year-old daughter has been raped by two redneck drunks and left for dead. He shoots down not only the perpetrators but also the innocent deputy leading them through the county courthouse. That we do identify is down to an extremely watchable performance from Jackson, by some way the best thing in the film.

The film compounds its justifiable revenge motif with a ludicrous scene where the badly injured deputy states in court he bears no grudges and would have done the same. The implications of this hardly bear thinking about, even though Jackson is given a speech about the treatment of black Americans by the law to make his actions understandable. What Hollywood thinks it is doing espousing the doubtful cause of revenge while pretending to be on the side of the angels is at best confused and at worst pandering.

Otherwise, the film works, possibly better than any other Grisham-inspired movie, even if Joel Schumacher isn't good enough to make it more than highly professional. We have all the familiar circumstances — the rape, the murder, the down-at-heel but idealistic lawyer (Matthew McConaughey) assisted by Sandra Bullock's even more liberal law student and encouraged by Donald Sutherland's veteran drunk. McConaughey has both presence and acting ability, though the latter is hardly highlighted by domestic scenes that run from small to big cliché. Bullock has little of consequence to do, but does it perkily.

The film keeps on dropping its most interesting facets, but its main implausibilities are cleverly glossed over and audience sympathies engaged with a skill you have to admire.

Gwyneth Paltrow as Emma

When there's no place like home

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

"WHAT are you here for, if I might ask?" said Win Roberts. "We're making a film about life in this home. But you say there is no life in this home," said Paul Watson.

The Home (Cutting Edge, Channel 4) was ironically titled. The magnolia paint was clean and bright. The glossy-haired girls cheerful and kind. "Is there anything you want us to pray for especially today?" asked the young priest. "No, just pray I die," said Elsie March. You could count seven silent beats before a suitable prayer suggested itself.

"Many of us are going under. No sane businessman would do it," said the owner. "It's getting very, very close to the borderline now. A lot of my peers are actually going under." His residents could have said the same. They were so old it didn't matter if they ate beef.

Win Roberts walked carefully down the stairs. She said: "I don't know why I came here. It just happened. I had a son. He died."

"What was his name?"

"I can't remember. Now isn't that stupid? Sorry. There's been no one to touch my memory for a long time. I was left on my own. I hadn't anywhere else to go."

"What happened?"

"Nothing. Just sitting."

"Who's your best friend here?"

"I haven't any."

"Who comes to see you?"

"Nobody."

"Who was your husband?"

"Nobody, really."

"What was his name?"

"I can't remember."

Her husband, she said, did a lot of television work. He was a TV repair man but for a moment a premonitory hand must have closed on Paul Watson's heart. He, too, has done a lot of TV work, most memorably The Family. He believes there is a story in everyone if you are patient.

There was a touch of Father Jack about Stan Harrison, who tended to burst into long-forgotten song. "I was a black sheep, Shepherd of the hills, I heard you calling!" He had been a gunner in the war. A blast of gunfire was followed immediately by Stan shouting "What?" A medal was pinned on his uniform by a general, then his dressing gown was being buttoned up by a girl.

"I'm not a woman-hater. I'm not prejudiced. But, at the same time, I've no time for 'em." It was not always so. "Plenty of beer . . . pints . . . plenty of music . . . plenty of women. But now the times are altered. Quiet round 'ere, isn't it? Quiet."

Reg Burgess said: "Everywhere I go, I don't know why it is, sir, 'ard luck's followed me and I've thought lots of times like breaking down." That "sir" came naturally. He had been in service with the Longfords all his life. "Lord Longford always said, 'If ever we missed a man, we missed you Reg.' That's what he always used to say to me."

The only completely candid people in the world are the very young and the very old. In case they say too much, they are denied the power of speech. Here was unspeakable loss. Something here about lost love . . . a lost child . . . a lost home. Sometimes, between welling tears and troublesome teeth, the story was as indecipherable as an old gravestone.

"I pray you," said Falstaff, "do not make me remember mine end."

Prisoner: Cell Block H (ITV), which pops up unpredictably in different television regions, at different stages of the story, is an Australian soap about thundering big women in boiler suits.

Dennis, bless him, sticks out a bit. For one thing he is English. For another he has a face so innocent you could eat your breakfast off it. Curly hair tops it off like parsley. You are charmingly reminded of Larry the Lamb.

Dennis has been arrested for rape and murder because a pair of tights was found in his car. Frankly, this suggests to me another scenario entirely. (A builder told me that all builders' labourers wear women's tights in cold weather. You may find this a handy hint for humiliating them.)

Meanwhile, the natives are cutting up rough and chucking bricks through Dennis's window ("Go back to where you came from, you murdering Pommie bastard!") A woman in a fun-fur coat screams: "It's the migrants! They should be kept out of the country. It's always them who's doing the killing and raping."

Dennis exits in marked manner and a Fair Isle sweater. As he is drowning his sorrows, even the town drunk draws the line at Dennis. "Buggered if I'm going to drink with scum like that. Get your backside out of here, Pom!" Dennis, by now a wrung-out rag, throws himself sobbing into the arms of that good egg, Meg.

It is always disturbing to discover how deeply you are disliked. You had rather assumed you were quietly popular. The thing to do is keep your cool. Migrant? Who are you calling a migrant, you mongrel? Stand still while I punch your head in. Something like that.

Deep and meaningful

Tim Radford

Oceanography: An Illustrated Guide
C P Summerhayes and S A Thorpe eds, foreword by Robert Ballard
Manson Publishing £48 hardcover
£24.50 paperback

THIS IS the book you didn't even know you needed. Seven-tenths of the planet is covered by its subject. Everything on the planet that dissolves is dissolved in it, in huge quantities. People have been sailing it since the first flint axe felled the first tree trunk. The top metre or so of it evaporates every year, and rises to the heavens to fall again as the rain that makes all life on land possible: even on dry land, we are rinsed daily by the sea. The great navigators sailed all of it long ago, and still they knew almost nothing about it. Only in 1960 did explorers realise that the world's biggest mountain range was actually several kilometres below their ships: a mountain range that runs for 70,000km and covers, says Robert Ballard — the man who found the sunken Titanic — 23 per cent of the Earth's surface. And, he adds, men walked on the Moon before they explored the mid-ocean ridge's rift valley for the first time, in manned submersibles.

Colin Summerhayes and Steve Thorpe, based at the Southampton Oceanography Centre, have decided it's time we all knew a bit more. The new book has great illustrations and it tries to be reader-friendly but it quickly gets into a lot of deep stuff. History? It's not such a new science. Robert Boyle (Boyle's law of gases) wrote about salinity, depth and temperature in the 1670s. A few decades later the Bolognese soldier Luigi Marsigli worked out why the Black Sea was salt rather than fresh (he probed the Bosphorus and found a saline counter-current running from the Mediterranean eastwards).

It took a bit longer to work out matters of salinity, density and temperature, but now we know why you get ice on top but the coldest water sinking to the bottom. It also raises interesting questions about why demersal fishes don't get numb fins. Now genetic scientists are trying to lift the "anti-freeze gene" from Arctic flounder and transfer it to a tomato to make it frost-proof: pure research pays in the strangest ways. But the oceans pay not just their way but ours: the ocean currents store and distribute the heat of the sun in a manner that controls not just the day-to-day weather but the climate over millennia. At 30°N, this transfer is something like the output of five million big power stations. Put it another way: the entire atmosphere, from the draughts that trickle under the door to the last wisps of the upper stratosphere, has the same thermal capacity as the top 2.5 metres of ocean.

All this is dizzying stuff, but it helps explain why satellite measurements, of ocean currents, of surface temperatures, of bulges and hollows in what used to be called, laughingly, sea level, now matter so much. But what is in the vast deep matters more than ever. It was once a perception that life was in the shallows, on the continental shelves, and that the great deep ocean was a desert, from undernourished surface to barren abyssal plain. This is not how it looks now: tiny marine creatures traffic in oxygen and carbon dioxide to keep the world breathing, and their tiny corpses rain like snow to the bottom to feed huge menageries of so far unidentified beasts.

And deeper still, the picture gets odder. Heat from volcanic vents in the darkest, coldest depths of the ocean provides the dynamism for a world not dependent on the Sun as a powerhouse, nor on green stuff for the raw material of growth. Scientists have been staring at the discoveries of the deep ocean, and once again been postulating extraterrestrial life, perhaps under the surface of Mars, or at the bottom of the warm deep ocean astronomers now think exists beneath the frozen surface of one of Jupiter's moons, Io. It's an odd payoff: just as we start to run out of cod and halibut, we look into the waters which made life on Earth possible and suddenly detect the shadow of the shape of possible life in another part of the Universe.



Plumbing the depths . . . Life as we barely know it on the ocean floor

Life comes breaking in as usual

Natasha Walter

Virginia Woolf
by Hermione Lee
Chatto 892pp £20

THE fashion for vast, intently detailed biographies of well-known writers can often look self-indulgent, almost decadent. Does our obsession with anecdotes and trivia muffle the most important confrontation of all, the confrontation of the writer and the reader?

But Hermione Lee's biography of Virginia Woolf is extraordinary. Its lucid, sensitive style reveals Woolf rather than muffling her, and leaves your appetite whetted, your senses sharpened. And yet it is vast and solid with detail, so that dipping into the notes makes you reel back; what a burden of evidence, what a mass of paper.

No letter from Virginia or any of her friends has escaped Lee's eyes, no diary page has gone unexamined, no essay unscoured, no account book untouched. But it is all made to answer to one light rhythm. Lee remains entirely in control of her unwieldy material, even if we are hardly aware of her presence.

The person we are aware of, all the time, is Virginia Woolf. She is here, this is her book, she speaks to us constantly. One would have thought that no new biography of her was necessary, what with Quentin Bell's poised two-volume life, biographies by Lyndall Gordon, Phyllis Rose and others, and her diaries and letters already sitting on the shelves. But the path that Lee finds through the mass of material feels both familiar and strange. This is the Virginia Woolf for our generation.

How does she differ from the Virginia Woolfs of previous generations? She is an indisputably great writer and a powerful woman; and the biographer is there simply to reveal those qualities, not to judge her or protect her. Perhaps the chapter on Woolf's mental illness is the most impressive one in the book.

Gone are the judgments of Quentin Bell, "All that summer she was mad," or the pity of other writers, who linked her illness to her childhood sexual abuse. Lee gives us something more interesting. She illuminates the shifting, historically determined nature of people's reactions to her illness; she explores the possibility that it was exacerbated by her treatment. And then she carefully teases out what Virginia herself made of the illness, how she herself constructed it, how it surfaced in her fiction, how she struggled against it. And so the illness is no longer just a sign of failure or damage, but an intrinsic — if tragic — part of her creativity.

The treatment of the mental illness is partly so impressive because of the clever structure Lee imposes on the biography. It progresses through the years in the usual manner, but some chapters, with titles like "Leonard", "Marriage", "Reading", "Bloomsbury" and "Ethel", concentrate on particular themes, so that Lee can gather up armfuls of material that would otherwise be too dispersed to pack much weight. Thus the book travels in two directions — it does not just skate forwards through the years, but also burrows down into Woolf's mind and experiences.

My favourite chapter in this regard is "Katherine", about Woolf's friendship with Katherine Mansfield. We are used to this friendship being treated in the usual biographical way; a few pages when they meet, then a page or two later on to remind us that they see each other very occasionally, and then, chapters later, the news of Katherine's death, told to Virginia over breakfast.

THAT IS how Quentin Bell does it, as anyone would, and it leaves one oddly unsatisfied. What happened in between those meetings, we want to know? Did Virginia think about her again? The friendship feels hugely important, and yet it pops up only two or three times in a crowded life. In Lee's biography the balance is different: the friendship is weighted with precise detail, with stacks of little fragments that are made to echo and comment upon one another.

Lee reveals Virginia to us emotionally, physically — as she gathers up scores of reactions to her presence — and, above all, intellectually. Her respect for her work releases Virginia from the particular frames that have always boxed her in before, especially that of "Bloomsbury". Bloomsbury . . . the idea of this idle, mannered clique that was assumed to exert such a stranglehold over early 20th century culture has for too long hidden the unpredictable bravery of Virginia Woolf's work, even from her admirers. But by relying so much on Virginia's own responses and words and experiences, Lee gives us an artist who exceeds her time and her group.

Woolf has suffered too long from a ladylike, eccentric image. Lee does not ignore her occasional snobbishness and desire to escape from politics. But she shows how this escape was, in itself, political, a statement that traditional politics had little to say to or for women.

On the other hand, Lee does not gather all her work up into a feminist statement, as, say, Phyllis Rose did when she wrote: "I view Woolf's feminism as the crux of her emotional as well as her intellectual life." As Lee constantly reminds us, her great novels always confound such frames. Lee's most careful reading is of that most difficult and subtle novel, To The Lighthouse. She is right to point out that it is a work of art that seems to move away from any frame you put on it: a book with a feminist vein that also celebrates the Victorian family; a book about her relations, in which Virginia appears in every character; a book that is experimental and nostalgic; deathly and life-affirming.

Lee reminds us so fiercely of Virginia's presence that it is a shock to turn the page and realise we are upon her death. Here, Lee's grasp of detail pays off strikingly: she picks her way through the tiny moments — the suicide notes, the inquest, friends' reactions — movingly, but without succumbing to any rhetoric or mawkishness. As the perfectly chosen epigraph to the book puts it: "I meant to write about death, only life came breaking in as usual."

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

The Race Gallery by Marek Kohn (Vintage, £7.99)

I REMEMBER reading somewhere that there is more genetic disparity between two types of the same species of snails in adjacent valleys of the Pyrenees than there is in the entire human race: it's the kind of observation that hovers at the back of Kohn's masterly study of the ways racially determined "science" seems to be making a comeback, despite its awfully tainted recent history. This is an elegant, timely and devastating critique of such positions, also aware of the way racial judgments can slip into the most well-intended theses. He gives short but thoughtful shrift to some of the more dismaying aspects of Afrocentrism (such as the attribution of mystical properties to the pigmenting agent, melanin). He is unafraid of looking hard at tough questions — such as correlations between intelligence statistics and race — and succeeds brilliantly, making us look again at the way we use and define such terms.

Nicholas Ray: An American Journey, by Bernard Eisenschitz, trs Tom Milne (Faber, £12.99)

THAT Ray should have such a feeling for the American mythos is unsurprising, given his background, his study with Frank Lloyd Wright, his early involvement with a socialist travelling theatre troupe, his ferocious speed habit: it's also unsurprising that the only biography of him should have been written by an editor of Cahiers du Cinema, a magazine which — to his own quiet bewilderment — regarded him as an auteur of genius. Readable and intelligent, so it must be well translated.

Virtually Normal: An Argument about Homosexuality, by Andrew Sullivan (Picador, £6.99)

SULLIVAN, sometime editor of the New Republic, uses both personal experience and political thought to make sense of contemporary attitudes to homosexuality, from liberationist to hard-line contra: the result is both moving and intelligent. Although British-born, his perspective is American, so we have to remember that "liberal", for the purposes of argument, is a dirty word — and Sullivan, although grateful for liberal tolerance, is a conservative, which is probably why he pleads so strongly for legalised gay marriage.

Rock Springs, by Richard Ford (Harvill Panther, £6.99)

FRANKLY, while the stories here are unfaultable, there is, in their precise, brusque tones, their edgy yet delicate respect for the surfaces of ordinary American lives, the sense that 95 per cent of modern American fiction is actually manufactured by a cookie factory in Milwaukee. Still, if you like this kind of thing done well, look no further.

Taking umbrage in Umbria

Sean O'Brien

After Hannibal
by Barry Unsworth
Hamish Hamilton 288pp £16

IN HIS poem "Florentines" Geoffrey Hill offers a glimpse of a travelling party of rich nobles: "a cavalcade passing, night not far off; / the stricken faces damnable and serene". A similarly dark and sensual mood can be found in the Italy of Barry Unsworth's new novel. If the contemporary setting of After Hannibal — summer in rural Umbria — seems less ferociously glamorous than the Renaissance of Hill's poem, Unsworth invests his chosen valley with a convincingly malevolent stink of greed and cruelty.

At the head of Lake Trasimenso, site of the Roman military catastrophe in 217 BC at the hands of the invading Carthaginians under Hannibal, the valley has seen a steady influx of newcomers of late. They include Chapman, a brayingly ignorant British property speculator, and his civilised wife, Cecilia; an Italian gay couple; an Italian historian whose wife has just left him; a German near-hermit maddened by the discovery of his father's membership of the SS; and a pair of retired art teachers from the US. Eagerly awaiting them are a local peasant family, the Checchettis; a bent English building project manager, Blemish; and the lawyer Mancini, the novel's secular *deus ex machina*.

Trouble begins with the maintenance of a wall abutting a road along the valley. It looks like farce when the Checchetti family begin to manufacture a row, but the dispute becomes a ritual acting out of ancient antagonisms and fears during which the Chapmans, exposed to the inscrutable simplicities of a folk-tale world, learn the extent of their own mutual distaste. The most startling vileness, though, is supplied by Stan Blemish, the English "project manager". Stan is clearly the object of considerable authorial satisfaction. A turd on legs, the fully-formed Thatcherite criminal in full self-righteous cry, he battens on the mild and innocent Greens, who plan to spend their retirement enjoying the landscapes of Italian painting from the house in which they have sunk their savings. Blemish feels — thinking is something he only does in connection with money — that it's his right and somehow his obligation to rob the Americans with all the powers of the local building trade at his disposal. The higher purpose is to enable his half-witted wife, Mildred, to establish a fake-medieval restaurant in the district. Equally sombre, and with less room for comedy, is the dispute between Fabio and his young partner Arturo over the possession of the house which the older man has trustingly signed over.

As often in Unsworth's work, history is felt to lean on the present without necessarily enlightening it. Yet while Unsworth can make history as present for us as it clearly is for him, the pessimistic humanism of his imagination forbids him to offer more than local resolutions of conflict. For all that they are sketches, his numerous characters become persuasive, and some of their doings have the horrific vividness of the drunkards in Chaucer's "Pardoner's Tale". But Unsworth's newcomers are in essence the same victims as the place has always accommodated and swallowed up. Nothing will change.

This seems to be why the novel rests a good deal of weight on the ambiguous figure of the lawyer, Mancini, whom we see at the end of the book with the next set of dupes. If there is a hint that Unsworth might be warning off his compatriots from joining him in his adopted home, the main purpose is to provide the novel with an imaginative exit from the treadmill of needs and desires and betrayals it has established. Mancini gives off sulphur and enlightenment in equal measure. It would be wrong to say he doesn't belong in this book, since he is really first on the scene, but the author himself doesn't seem to have decided how seriously to take him.

After Hannibal can be obtained at the discount price of £13 by mail order from Books@The Guardian Weekly

Barry Unsworth . . . revisits ancient fears PHOTOGRAPH: NEIL LIBBERT

Bring back the bedsit

Jenny Turner

Reality and Dreams
by Muriel Spark
Constable 160pp £14.95

"*REDUNDANCY* comes to this. No one fires a man if he is exceptionally good . . . ." Is this really true any more? Was it ever? Tom, the old-style cinéaste hero of Muriel Spark's new novel, is lying etherised in hospital after falling from a film-set crane. While his ribs are mending, he hears that five members of his family have been made redundant in the last week.

"There comes a time," suggests his horrible daughter Marigold, "when one has to see things *sub specie aeternitatis*, under the light of eternity. That is what my parents now have to do. Examine their utility, their serviceability, their accountability, their duties and commitments . . . ." And this is exactly what Tom — a man capricious in his passions, adoring one daughter and despising another, hiring and firing starlets from his set — will do.

Reality And Dreams comes to us as the 20th novel from a writer who has been steadily supplying slim volumes to her devoted readership for close on 40 years. Its title should make its purpose clear. Muriel Spark is a prolific, stylistically versatile writer who knows as well as anyone can that her work has most likely entered its last phase.

Within this context, the new book seems minor and rather awkward. In style and setting it throws back not to Spark's post-war London bedsit books but to the international-style experimentalism of her less popular seventies period. It's simply not half as nice to read a novel about a bunch of cosmopolitan "womanising and manising" spiritual bankrupts as to follow the adventures of one of Spark's bedsitter heroines. And the subtle twisting and turning of key words and phrases on which so much of Spark's purpose depends cannot help but look a bit Theatre of the Absurd when done as dialogue instead of through the single bedsit-heroine voice.

And yet, this doesn't make it a failure. It's just a difficult piece with difficult things to do and say. At the moment, there can be few styles of storytelling so embarrassingly out of fashion as the sixties and seventies international style, with its cosmopolitan settings, its geometrical structuring of character and event. But it won't always be out of fashion, and when it comes back in again, Spark's experiments will be recognised as principled and brave.

Paradise lost for the heathen rabble in a brave new world

Andrew Biswell

Milton in America
by Peter Ackroyd
Sinclair-Stevenson 277pp £15.99

WHAT would have happened if the republican poet John Milton had fled England in 1660, following the Restoration of King Charles II, and emigrated to America? This is the question that Peter Ackroyd poses in his intriguing new novel, as he imagines the blind author arriving in the apparently Edenic setting of New England. Would Milton have succeeded in building a brave new world? Or was America, like Europe before it, predestined to be a place of foulness, envy, tyranny, corruption and Original Sin — the sort of place, in short, described in Milton's epic poem, Paradise Lost?

Ackroyd often asks "What if . . ?", notably in his novel about the forger Chatterton and in his biography of Dickens. The springboard for the new novel turns out to be his recent biography of Blake. Like Milton himself, Blake was a political radical who looked back fondly to the reforming spirit of Cromwell's Commonwealth. He also produced illustrations for many of Milton's poems, and published a weird prophetic book entitled "Milton" (containing the text of the hymn "Jerusalem"). It is important to establish at once that Ackroyd's Milton is more Blakean dream-vision than an attempt at biographical accuracy, and it is in this spirit that his tale of the new Jerusalem should be read.

Invited by the Puritan brethren to become leader of their new colony, Milton draws up a list of terrifying punishments for various misdemeanours (whipping for prostitutes, burning for sodomites). He regards the American Indians as little more than a "heathen rabble", so it is left to his young companion, Goosequill, to befriend them and learn their language. Temptation, however, is never far away in Eden, and there seems to be a strong danger that Milton himself — guilty, as one character suggests, of the sin of pride — will fall from grace. When he goes on an excursion among the native Americans, the lure of earthly delights presents itself in the form of a distilled native spirit and a young Indian girl. Will Milton succumb, we wonder, and can his paradise survive if he does?

The tortuous plot of Milton In America, as it flips between various narrators and periods in time, is a considerable achievement in itself, but the real cleverness of Ackroyd's writing can be measured in terms of structure and technique. Look closely enough, and you become aware that the novel is in fact composed along broadly Miltonic lines. the disrupted chronology is borrowed from Paradise Lost (even the War in Heaven between the good and evil angels is parodied), and the text is crammed with quotations from Milton's poetry (ending with "The blind man wandered ahead and, weeping, through the dark wood took his solitary way").

Yet the book is much more than an ironic exercise in allusion and erudition. Ackroyd has come up with an almost seamless work; one which earns its place on the same shelf as the best of his literary fantasies.

This side of knowing

Bridget Frost

Distance
by Colin Thubron
Heinemann 218pp £15.99

DISTANCE, from the Latin *distare* — to stand apart — is a word one might well associate with Colin Thubron. As a travel writer, he has confessed to a sense of separateness. In his novels, too, themes of isolation and alienation recur. First there was Pashley, lost amid the other residents of a mental asylum in A Cruel Madness, then there was the doctor at a loss for a cure in the strange landscape of Turning Back The Sun.

In Distance, the isolation is the result of amnesia. The story begins with Edward Sanders, a 28-year-old astronomer, looking down at his hand and realising a) that it is his, and b) that he has no recollection of how he got here. In short, the last two years of his life are suddenly a blank. Guided by an address on an envelope in his pocket, he arrives at a house in Dorset to discover that it is his home and that he lives there with a woman artist called Naomi.

Anyone not familiar with the darkness of Thubron's writing might think that this scenario is set up to allow an ironical reassessment by the protagonist of his present situation. But Thubron's business here is not irony, it is fear. With his customary clarity he draws a bleak, amnesiac world in which a young man must face again old griefs and linger "like a coward, just this side of knowing". On the other side, the memory of a destructive, obsessive relationship looms.

Beyond this personal drama lies a fascination with the enormity of space. Edward's work involves the study of black holes and collapsed stars. The comparisons between the cosmic and personal worlds are handled gracefully. Edward's memory has "collapsed" and when it rushes back on him, its impact is "like the mass of a dead star".

But this painful recollection is described in terms which give the reader the opportunity to recall an earlier episode (a diving expedition): "The outrigger stammered to a halt, and we cast anchor. Beneath us, through the turquoise water, we could see the curve of the coral wall echoing the coast and almost as clear. We looked down a hundred feet as if at our hands." Such passages reveal Thubron's greatest literary gift. However stark his portrayal of grief and loss, he never quite allows it to eclipse the heady brilliance of momentary exhilaration. This, after all, is what the memory tries to retain — while the rest we would more willingly forgo.

Cricket Sunday League

Surrey enjoy a stroll in the gardens

David Foot in Cardiff

NOTHING could look less like The Oval than Sophia Gardens with its parkland aura and sheer Celtic cosiness. But the journey from the vast impersonal sporting citadel of Surrey — soon to be softened itself by landscaping — across the new Severn Bridge, was a celebratory one.

Surrey won with almost embarrassing ease by seven wickets with just over seven overs left. It was the first time they had carried off any kind of title for 14 years. This one was worth £40,000 to them as Sunday League champions.

Alec Stewart, savouring county success for the first time in his lengthy Surrey career, said: "It has been in every sense a team effort. David Gilbert had a huge task ahead of him when he arrived. He has proved a great man-manager and the boys have responded."



Graham Thorpe, Martin Bicknell and Alec Stewart congratulate Adam Hollioake on bowling Tony Cottee PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF MORGAN

Gilbert said: "In the end the match became a formality although it wasn't necessarily going to be easy on this wicket. It was just a matter of getting everyone in the club moving in the right direction."

Surrey's reply to Glamorgan's 159 was always going to be a stroll. They had rattled 65 off the first 10 overs and had passed 100 by the halfway stage.

Butcher disappeared in the 13th over and the revitalised Brown (41) in the 16th. Then Stewart, who survived a vociferous first-ball lbw appeal, and Thorpe — caught with understandable carelessness with three to win — virtually steered them home with not too much sweat expended.

What the new champions demonstrated was that their fragile "last furlong" temperament of recent years had been exorcised. The victory against Warwickshire with two balls left and Northamptonshire earlier this month off the last delivery graphically made this professional point.

Three more wickets for Hollioake took him to 39 for the season, more than anyone in the Sunday competition. And he hardly bowls in the county championship.

Glamorgan had batted with a wariness reminiscent of a Highbury dressing-room, never managing to generate a decent sense of aggression against steady rather than threatening bowling. James and Cottey were the exceptions, though they hit only three boundaries between them. Croft's six to long-on was a late solitary gesture in the sunlight.

Not all at the Cardiff ground were apparently intent on the cricket, though. Two seagulls copulating on the outfield proved a lengthy diversion for a voyeuristic section of the crowd. Sky TV did not notice, it seems — or maybe they were simply leaving that scene to David Attenborough and the BBC.

Final table

	P	W	L	D	Nr	Pts
Surrey (9)	17	12	4	0	1	50
Nottinghamshire (11)	17	12	4	0	1	50
Yorkshire (12)	17	11	6	0	0	44
Warwickshire (2)	17	10	6	0	1	42
Somerset (14)	17	10	6	0	1	42
Northants (13)	17	10	6	0	1	42
Middlesex (17)	17	9	7	0	1	38
Worcestershire (3)	17	8	6	0	3	38
Lancashire (4)	17	9	8	0	0	36
Kent (1)	17	8	8	1	0	34
Derbyshire (8)	17	7	7	1	2	34
Leicestershire (7)	17	7	7	0	3	34
Glamorgan (6)	17	7	8	0	2	32
Sussex (10)	17	6	9	0	2	28
Hampshire (18)	17	4	10	0	3	22
Gloucestershire (15)	17	4	10	0	3	22
Essex (5)	17	4	12	0	1	18
Durham (16)	17	1	15	0	1	6

Surrey win on better net run-rate, ie runs scored/over minus runs conceded/over.

Last season's positions in brackets

● Surrey's chances of ending the season with a double were severely dented when their final county championship match with Glamorgan ended in a draw. Leicestershire look certain to secure the title — even if they fail to win their last match against Middlesex.

Leicestershire, on 272 points, are 14 points ahead of Surrey, with Kent a further point behind. If Leicestershire get maximum bonus points from their last game a draw would give them the 11 points required to put the title beyond Surrey's reach.

Football Premiership: Leicester City 0 Liverpool 3

King Berger is off to a sizzling start

Paul Weaver

ROY EVANS, the Liverpool manager, had warned that Patrik Berger was not so much knocking on the first-team door as threatening to smash it down. On Sunday the 22-year-old Czech international took it off its hinges — and it fell flat on Stan Collymore.

Berger, a £3 million signing from Borussia Dortmund, had made only one brief appearance this season. At Leicester, he replaced Collymore, perhaps for good, at half-time. By the end he had scored two fine goals, as many as Collymore and Robbie Fowler have managed between them all season, to put his club on top of the Premiership table.

The Czech is not so much a striker as an attacking midfielder, but it is difficult to imagine Liverpool not finding a way to integrate such a gifted player into the team.

Berger rushed away directly after the game to prepare for international duty and left the talking to John Barnes. "He's world-class and you need as many world-class players as you can find if you're going to take on the likes of Manchester United and Newcastle," he said. "He's got great vision, great strength and can play one-twos. I thought he was the best Czech player in the summer, even though he was not always in the side."

It was not only Collymore who struggled in the first half. Liverpool looked jaded following last week's trip to Finland. And Leicester, who have now won only one of their six games, began playing neat, assertive football and were the more impressive side in the first half.

Liverpool appear to represent the yardstick for every other club and Leicester's manager Martin O'Neill said he was pleased at half-time although he felt his team should have scored in the first minute, when Emile Heskey's powerful header brought an outstanding reflex save from David James.

But, once Berger came on, a disappointing match was never the same again. Almost immediately he had a shot blocked, and it appeared to galvanise the entire side. He scored the first in the 58th minute with an emphatic left-footed finish after Julian Watts let Steve McManaman dispossess him.

Liverpool went 2-0 up three minutes later when Kasey Keller allowed Mickey Thomas's low, firm drive to squirm under his body. And Berger completed the scoring after 78 minutes with another fierce left-footed shot after Fowler had dummied Jason McAteer's pass.

Evans said: "The change made all the difference. Sometimes it can be difficult [for the opposition] picking up a player in a deeper position. It was a dream debut by Patrik. There were a few on the bench waiting to get on but Patrik got his chance and he took it well.

"I remember Ian St John scoring a hat-trick on his debut at Everton but this must rank as one of the best starts. He added a new pace to the game immediately he came on and it was something we needed badly."

O'Neill, whose team have now failed to score in four of their matches, shrugged: "We played well in the first half but I'm not interested in moral victories over 45 minutes. The game lasts for 90. Berger is obviously a class player. Unfortunately he's not in my team."

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Win some, lose some in Europe

IT WAS a week of mixed fortunes for British football clubs as they began their European campaign for this season. In the Uefa Cup first round, first leg Newcastle United overwhelmed their Swedish challengers Halmstad 4-0 at St James's Park. The convincing margin of the victory should prove more than enough to secure the Magpies a place in the second round. Newcastle's goals came from Ferdinand, Asprilla, Albert and Beardsley.

But it was a different story at Highbury where Arsenal went down 3-2 to Borussia Moenchengladbach. The Gunners now travel to Germany for the return match more in hope than expectation of pulling off the minimum 2-0 victory they need to progress in the tournament.

Aston Villa meanwhile could only draw 1-1 at home to Swedish part-timers Helsinghborg. The visitors showed little ambition but plenty of organisation in defence. The result will make Villa's trip to Scandinavia later this month a distinctly uncomfortable one.

The League of Wales champions Barry Town have been a full-time professional side for only one year and their inexperience was very much in evidence at Pittodrie where they were beaten 3-1 by Aberdeen.

Manchester United may look a team littered with players from Europe, but their performance in the Champions League match against Juventus in Turin fell woefully short of European standards. Juventus, the European Cup holders, took charge from the start and dominated the game so completely that United failed to produce a single worthwhile effort. The Reds went down to a 34th minute winner from Alen Boksic. The Croatian star collected a pass and outpaced Nicky Butt before lifting the ball over Peter Schmeichel.

It was the Italian's own poor finishing that kept the margin of their victory so narrow. An effort by Antonio Conte earlier in the match was disallowed and Schmeichel made two superb saves in the second half to prevent a rout.

In Zurich, a three-goal blizzard by Swiss champions Grasshopper Zurich sank the Scottish champions Rangers. Kubilay Turkyilmaz was the man who did most of the damage. The skilful Swiss international striker scored in each half and set up the third goal for Murat Yakin after the hosts had imposed their authority on the match from kick-off.

In the European Cup Winners' Cup, first round, first leg, a 61st goal from Liverpool's Norwegian import Stig Inge Bjornebye brought them victory over MyPa-47 and should ensure a safe passage into the second round at the expense of their Finnish hosts. The goal was Liverpool's first in a European tie for four games and it came during a performance which was far from distinguished.

AUSTRALIAN motorcyclist Michael Doohan claimed his third 500cc world title in a row after finishing second in the Catalonia Grand Prix on Sunday. Spaniard Carlos Checa won the race — the first win of his career — while Doohan's title rival and Honda team-mate Alex Creville of Spain could finish only third.

THREE is certainly a lucky number for Kent paceman Dean Headley. Playing against Hampshire at Canterbury, he nothced up his third hat-trick of the season to become only the third man in cricketing history to achieve the feat. The record was first set by Gloucestershire's Charles Parker in 1923 and matched by Indian J S Rao in the 1963-64 season. The victims who succumbed to successive Headley deliveries were John Stephenson, James Bovill and Simon Renshaw.

JONATHAN THAXTON emerged as the victor over Bernard Paul in Sheffield to claim the vacant WBO intercontinental light-welterweight title after their 12-round bout failed to produce a knock-out blow. Afterwards the 22-year-old from Norwich received a rap on the knuckles from his trainer, Brendan Ingle, who said: "Jonathan should have knocked him out in three or four rounds. His trouble is that he's too nice."

At Ringsted, Denmark, the Scottish flyweight Keith Knox failed in his European title challenge when he was outpointed 117-113 by Jesper Jensen.

TOMMI MAKINEN of Finland succeeded Colin McCrae as world rally champion by winning the Rally Australia on Monday. The 32-year-old clinched the championship with a victory in the four-day, 974-mile rally in his Mitsubishi Lancer. McRae finished fourth, behind Carlos Sainz and his Subaru team-mate Kenneth Eriksson.

STEWART HOUSTON has been appointed manager of Queens Park Rangers. Houston, who quit as caretaker manager at Arsenal last week, has accepted a three-year contract with the west London club. The position became vacant when Ray Wilkins left the club earlier this month. Houston had two periods in temporary charge at Arsenal: the first when George Graham, now manager of Leeds United, was sacked, and the second after Bruce Rioch was dismissed last month.

REPLACING HOUSTON at Arsenal will be Arsène Wenger. The Frenchman, currently in charge of Grampus Eight in Japan, will arrive at Highbury on September 30 and start work on a three-year contract believed to be worth £2 million.

Athletics Great North Run



Happy ending . . . McColgan shows her delight at winning the Women's Elite Race in the Great North Run PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN GILES

Flying Scot McColgan bounces back in style

Duncan Mackay in South Shields

LIZ McCOLGAN put the disappointment of the Olympic Games behind her on Sunday when she won the Great North Run in a dramatic finish.

The Dundee woman, the favourite for the marathon gold medal in Atlanta before she was stricken by illness when she was bitten by an insect two days before the race and finished 16th, clawed back 12 seconds in the last mile on the long-time leader Esther Kiplagat.

McColgan dug deep and swept past the Kenyan with only 200 metres of the half-marathon remaining to retain her title in 1hr 10min 28sec.

"No one knows what I went through in Atlanta," McColgan said. "I was in fabulous shape but the bite poisoned my whole blood system. I was laid low for a long time after the Olympics but, whereas some people might stand back and give up, I'm the opposite." Indeed, the phrase "never say die" could have been invented for her.

Kiplagat and McColgan's great Scottish rival Yvonne Murray, racing seriously beyond 10,000 metres for the first time and having her first race for more than a year after a back injury, quickly dropped her as they set up a brutal battle over the undulating route from Newcastle to South Shields.

Immediately after eight miles Murray fell off the pace as she paid the price for her early enthusiasm. She eventually faded to fourth, nearly two minutes behind McColgan, who beat her for the first time in nine years. But Kiplagat ploughed on remorselessly.

However, as blue skies and large crowds greeted the runners on their descent to the coastal finish, McColgan's racing antennae sensed that Kiplagat was weakening. The roar that swirled up from the roadside warned Kiplagat what was coming. "I could see Esther had a big lead as we came to the last mile," McColgan said, "but I decided to put my head down and go for it. I felt like a train when I went past her." The eight-second gap McColgan opened up in these last few metres was evidence of how badly the Kenyan folded.

McColgan will now run in the world half-marathon championships in Palma in a week's time before tackling the Tokyo marathon in November and the London marathon next spring.

"Nothing will make up for the disappointment of the Olympics," she added, "but hopefully I can salvage something from the hard work I put in."

The men's race was easily won by Kenya's Benson Masya in 1.01.43 for the fourth time in six years, with Paul Evans runner-up for the second time, 12 seconds behind.

Golf Trophée Lancôme

Parnevik victorious as Montgomerie overheats

David Davies at St Nom la Bretêche

AT 10 minutes past noon on Sunday Colin Montgomerie launched his final round of the Trophée Lancôme with five successive birdies. That frenetic start took him from eight under to 13 under and gave him a two-shot lead over a bewildered Jesper Parnevik.

Just over four hours later, however, the situation was virtually reversed. Parnevik finished with a three-under 67 for a 12-under total of 268. A stunned and shattered Montgomerie came in with a 71 to finish five adrift. The Scot had suffered a seven-stroke turn-around in 13 holes and, instead of winning the £108,330 that went to Parnevik, had to settle for £72,210.

Montgomerie's halves of 32, three under, and 39, four over, tell much of the tale but there were contributing, extraneous reasons for his downfall. Most people experience road rage at some point in their working week; with Montgomerie it is fairway fury. French galleries can be infuriating and, when some of the photographers also misbehave, the problem is compounded. On Sunday there was a large crowd in this perfumed garden, attracted by a warm sun and the prospect of a gentle stroll, chatting and watching the occasional shot.

The roped-off fairways were treated with distinct disdain, which meant that on every tee the players had to wait while hundreds of people crossed over to get the best view. All this had a deleterious effect on the short-fused Scot.

As he walked down the 11th fairway he went towards the ropes, where his wife Eimear was walking. They chatted, Montgomerie spreading his hands outwards in the familiar gesture that says, "What can I do?" The answer turned out to be not much.

Both men had hit massive drives and Parnevik then hit a wedge to two feet. Montgomerie followed to five feet but hit a tentative putt that did not touch the hole. When Parnevik holed, the Scot was behind for the first time since the end of the third round.

Things got worse at the 13th, where Parnevik fashioned a lovely faded second from the rough on to the green and Montgomerie, looking for the same shot, instead found a pull that ran through the green on the left. He had to hole from seven feet for a bogey to fall two behind.

The tournament was decided at the 14th. Parnevik was down the middle, Montgomerie in the right rough and, perhaps sensing the kill, the Swede hit a superb second to five feet. The Scot, again trying for a gentle fade, overdid it this time, found the bunker and his eventual bogey, to the Parnevik birdie, meant that his rival had now established a four-shot margin.

Montgomerie had played most of the back nine in temper-tantrum mode but, by allowing it to get to him, he was hurting only himself.

Football results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: Arsenal 4, Sheffield Wed 1; Chelsea 1, Aston Villa 1; Coventry 2, Leeds 1; Derby County 1, Sunderland 0, Everton 1, Middlesbrough 2, Leicester 0, Liverpool 3; Manchester Utd 4, Nottingham Forest 1, Newcastle 2, Blackburn 1; Southampton 0, Tottenham 1, West Ham 0, Wimbledon 2. **Leading positions:** 1, Liverpool (played 6, points 14), 2, Manchester Utd (6-12); 3, Chelsea (6-12).

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE: First Division: Barnsley 1, QPR 3; Birmingham 3, Stoke 1; Bolton 2, Portsmouth 0; Charlton 1, Reading 0, Crystal Pal 3, Manchester City 1; Norwich 0, Southend 0, Oxford 2, Bradford 0; Port Vale 1, Grimsby 1; Sheffield Utd 1, Ipswich 3; Swindon 2, Tranmere 1; West Brom 2, Wolves 4. **Leading positions:** 1, Bolton (7-16); 2, Barnsley (6-15), 3, Wolverhampton (7-14)

Second Division: Brentford 1, Blackpool 1; Bristol R 0, Watford 1; Burnley 2, Wycombe 1; Crewe 3, Wrexham 1; Luton 0, Chesterfield 1; Notts County 1, Millwall 2; Peterborough 2, York 2, Preston 0, Bournemouth 1; Rotherham 2, Bristol City 2; Shrewsbury 1, Bury 1; Stockport 3, Plymouth 1; Walsall 1, Gillingham 0. **Leading positions:** 1, Brentford (7-17), 2, Watford (7-15); 3, Chesterfield (7-15)

Third Division: Colchester 1, Hull 1; Darlington 1, Hereford 0, Exeter 2, Brighton 1, Hartlepool 1, Wigan 1; Lincoln 1, Barnet 0, Mansfield 0, Leyton Orient 2, Northampton 1, Cambridge 2, Rochdale 2, Doncaster 1; Scarborough 1, Carlisle 1, Scunthorpe 0, Cardiff 1, Swansea 1, Fulham 2, Torquay 0, Chester 0 **Leading positions:** 1, Fulham (7-18), 2, Wigan (7-18), 3, Carlisle (7-14)

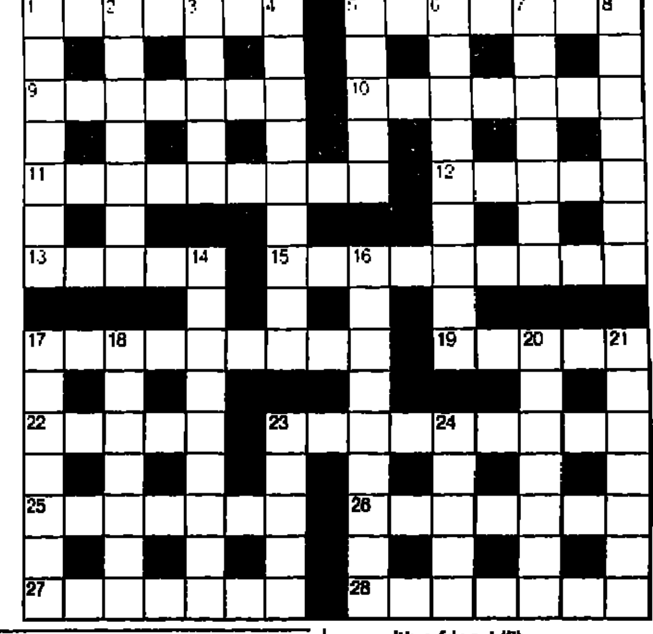
BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE: Premier Division: Aberdeen 3, Kilmarnock 0, [illegible] **Leading positions:** [illegible]

First Division: [illegible] **Leading positions:** [illegible]

Second Division: [illegible] **Leading positions:** [illegible]

Third Division: [illegible] E Stirling 0 **Leading positions:** [illegible]

Cryptic crossword by Araucaria



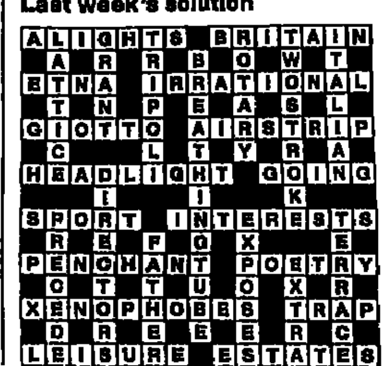
Across

1, 5 Steamy, fruity affair giving the government something to prove? (7, 7)
9 Muppet show needs oxygen to raise the speed (2-5)
10 Illuminated period for student, to be exact (7)
11 I would like leader in board game to be s.p. (9)
12 Island often conned (5)
13 Trademark's the Word (5)
15 See 21
17 Bird and beast for Banbury could give shock to the core (9)
19 Land where one doesn't start with a friend (5)
22 I shall be heard in the gangway (5)
23 Everyman book? One number made funny money proposed by another (4-5)
25, 26 Sort of sandwich with whisky, the ultimate folly? (7, 7)
27 Put one's name down once more for green rolling? (2-5)
28 Journalist holds a gun in Tower Hamlets (4, 3)

Down

1, 17 Assembly for mechanic or club for aldermen etc.? (7, 7)
2, 18 An article on firm's inside, to be about a swimsuit? (7,7)
3 Wandering? On the contrary, crazy (5)
4 Awful rot by Dickensian who lays on the flattery? (9)
5 Law enforcers in Edinburgh or Athens? (5)
6 Enticed to building to make discovery? (9)
7 Middle-Easterner is King of Britain raised on island (7)
8 See 20
14 Bernes scattered round church by German writer, Welsh translator, or furniture maker (9)
16 Docile has a D in it: that can be changed (9)
17 See 1 down
18 See 2
20, 8 Visualise gods providing clergy are lit up (7,7)
21, 15 Termed £1 competence to be company property? (7,9)
23 Fifth lane up for greasing? (5)
24 Thinks of 9 (5)

Last week's solution



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